

# THE SECULAR CITIZEN

A NATIONAL FAMILY WEEKLY

Vol.25 No.51 ■ Mumbai, December 19, 2016 ■ Rs. 20

*Christmas  
Special  
2016*



THE SECULAR CITIZEN

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A Merry Christmas &  
A Peace Filled Happy New Year 2017



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**January 1<sup>st</sup> 2017**



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**The Secular Citizen, Editor and team**

**HAPPY  
BIRTHDAY**



# THE SECULAR CITIZEN

A NATIONAL FAMILY WEEKLY

Vol.25 No.51 December 19, 2016 Rs.20/-

99, Perin Nariman Street, Fort, Mumbai - 400 001.

Tel: 022 - 2269 35 78 / 2265 49 24

Email: secular@sezariworld.com, secular@vsnl.com

Website: www.sezariworld.com

Editor-in-chief : LAWRENCE COELHO

Editor: PHILIP MYABOO

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There will be no issue

**SECULAR CITIZEN**

dated 26-12-2016.

Our next issue will be

dated 02-01-2017

(i.e. Vol.26 No.1)

—Publisher

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Merry Christmas  
&  
A Peace Filled Happy  
New Year 2017

RNI No. 56987/92

Registered No. MCS/100/2015-17

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# The Season of Joy and Goodwill

**C**hristmas is the season of joy and goodwill. Is it? Looking at what we see around us is a sordid picture of numerous homeless citizens, the street children, the abandoned, the destitute and the starving. They don't feel what the spirit of Christmas is supposed to be – a season of joy, goodwill, giving and receiving. It is also a time of reflection and gratitude to God for all we have and for sending down his Son to be among us. Sadly, over the years, the world has become selfish and self-centred and therefore the true spirit of Christmas does not reach out to those abandoned by society.

Whatever the festival – Diwali, Christmas, New Year – these would like to celebrate, they are always faced by the grim reality of poverty-linked problems such as hunger and starvation, malnutrition, caste discrimination and what not. Food is not available to the starving millions, yet the nation's granaries are over-flowing, and stocks are wasted, states are refusing to share their river waters while rainfall has been in abundance.

What a pity that even over half a century of independence, India finds itself at acritical juncture. A nation that takes pride in its struggle for freedom and its stature as the world's largest democracy, today finds itself in the grip of widespread disillusionment and discontent as a result of the growing crime and corruption in public life.

Sad to say, India is ranked a lowly 97th among 118 developing countries for which the Global Hunger Index (GHI) was calculated this year. Countries worse than ours include extremely poor African countries such as Niger, Chad, Ethiopia and Sierra Leone beside two of India's neighbours Afghanistan and Pakistan.

One of the top problems facing India

by Irwin Almeida



today is malnourishment and stunting. Statistics reveal that five lakh Indian children die from malnourishment each year. At the age of two, 38% of our children are stunted, also because of malnourishment. Stunting is a medical term implying that they are prevented from mentally and physically developing fully.

Unfortunately, those in authority who are supposed to uplift the underprivileged are more concerned with putting strictures on the minorities, restricting what they may see, eat or drink.

The current climate of intolerance seems to have aggravated the nation's conscience. The rhetoric indulged in by some of our leaders is often problematic, as it is alienating people of the minority communities. Dissent and freedom of speech which are fundamental rights is in a way ignored.

Yet, no matter, everyone knows it is Christmas and people are willing to dismiss this background temporarily, to join the world in celebrating this joyous festival of peace and goodwill. It is time to remember after all that what matters most today is the spirit of goodwill and giving instead of a world of closed spaces, closed fists and closed minds. These must necessarily be opened and though individuals have to accept things as they are, one can surely determine what to give, where to give and how to give.

This kind of concept works in building personal relations too, where the more you give the better you get connected and develop even more likely contacts. This in turn is supposed to improve emotional health and the climate of relationships. Early studies linking stress to illness often showed that generosity has some valuable paybacks such as the love and gratitude inspired in those



we helped. It was also realised, that like stress. Love has a cumulative effect.

This idea has often been dismissed as "altruistic egoism", yet psychiatrists have identified altruism as one of the qualities that help even the most poorly adjusted to deal with the stresses of life. The reverse is also true, and holding on to things you should be giving away could lead to ill health. Gift giving does not always mean the wrapped up parcel with a greeting card we are so used to -- giving also means meeting the needs of the less privileged. That is when Santa becomes a human necessity.

The world situation today is so tense that there is no place where there is no strife or struggle. It seems like nobody wants peace, because peace is not just the absence of conflict but the joy of living in friendship and harmony with each other. This of course is contrary to the dictates of commerce and the power struggle among nations.

That is something which will always be. So let it not disturb us because we know its Christmas and the season of peace and goodwill.



# TO THE MANGER BORN!

## An Alberionean Perspective

**A**mong the numerous reflections related to Christmas that one comes across, especially from among the saints, is that of Blessed James Alberione who gave his 10-unit Pauline Family Jesus **Master: Way-Truth-Life** as the very basis of the Pauline charism. His reflection on the 'manger' in the Christmas Crib had him consider the manger itself as symbolic of the Way, the Truth and the Life that Jesus is.

### The Manger as WAY

When the Father decided to put his plan of salvation for fallen humankind into action, he did not choose to send His only begotten Son in a fabulous manner, i.e. amidst the splendour of a palace or the comfort of a stately villa but through simple human means, i.e. "born of a woman" (Gal 4:4) and born amidst the lowliest of God's creatures, the ox and the ass, in a stable. And Mary, God's chief instrument in the salvation drama, places him in a 'manger', a trough from which the animals had their feed.

Further, the place where Jesus grew up prompted Nathaniel to ask: "What good can come from Nazareth?" (Jn 1:46) The reign of God begins like a mustard seed. Very significant to recall here are the Lord's own words: "If you had faith as tiny as the mustard seed....." (Mt 17:20). Indeed, it is from little acorns that grow mighty oaks, the mightiest being the Son of our Creator-God, a child born in a manger—Emmanuel, God-with-us. "Blessed is the one who begins from the manger," says Alberione whom Blessed Pope Paul VI called "a Marvel of our Times." The manger

not only bore the immortal God of Creation born in mortal form to be the Way to the Father but became the WAY. O yes! Everything begins from the manger! We begin with partaking of a meal laid in the manger for us!

### The Manger as TRUTH

"What is Truth?" asked Pilate of the very personification of the TRUTH that he took for granted (Mt 18:38)! In being laid in the manger, Jesus became at once both food and the receptacle of food for the hungry, making the manger the centre of the story of salvation. Looking at it from a different perspective, James Alberione, whom Pope Saint John Paul II termed "the First Apostle of the New Evangelization", considered the manger a lamp that must give light to all humanity. As the Evangelist says, "He [Jesus] was the true light that enlightens every man" (Jn 1:9)! Since then, everything flows from the Son of God, who is the Light, the Truth and Wisdom of the Father whereby all of the human and theological sciences find their centre in the manger, because the true Master is Christ, the infant-Lord of Bethlehem.

All light comes from Jesus the Truth who was to the manger born so to say! God in His mercy gives us His wisdom. With the receptacle having borne the TRUTH in flesh and blood the manger becomes the Truth, the Truth that was commissioned to set us free (cf Jn 8:32b). And if we have begun with the manger, we shall find in it all the light we need to illumine our way through life.

### The Manger as LIFE



The manger is "full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14) and is thus implicit of life. All the good things that we could ever desire or seek, we find in the Christ-child lying on the hay in the manger, grace-filled like nothing else ever! There we find life! Jesus is totally poor in terms of earthly possessions but he is absolutely rich in heavenly goods, or better still, he both has and is the true wealth of the Father and of men, that wealth being life itself—"I came that they may have life and have it in abundance" (Jn 10:10b).

Given the times and the circumstances in which we live, the ideal thing to do this Christmas is to go to his manger with trust and express before him our heart's desires that include the needs of humanity, the needs of our fellow members in our Small Christian Communities, the needs of those we love and who love us. Would that we cared to remember everyone and, expanding our hearts, specially reach out to those in need of spiritual help even as we allow the surreal sight in the manger to fill our hearts with gratitude untold for the sheer magnificence of the earth-shaking event that the Nativity of the Lord actually is! Seen from this perspective, **the Manger that was life-giving in that it bore life in all its fullness invites us all to be life-giving, making Christmas a celebration of LIFE that flows to us from the TRUTH that the WAY is!**



by Ladislaus L  
D'Souza

# Christmas: God's Concrete Act Of Mercy

by Leon Bent

**T**he Gospel of John in chapter 3:16 tells us that the Incarnation of Jesus was brought about by God's mercy alone. Divine Love emptied Himself in the form and habit of humans: That was the Incarnation. Later, Jesus laid down his love for his friends, for greater love than this no man had: That was Redemption. This is why Pope Francis said in "Misericordiae Vultus", the Bull of Induction of the Extraordinary Year of Mercy, "Jesus Christ is the Face of the Father's mercy." The Latin word misericordis means "opening one's heart to wretchedness," and is God identity card. This is why mercy needs to be the lifeline and lifestyle of each one of us.

God wants to us to grow in joy and wonder at the coming of His Son, Mercy Incarnate. Then our hearts will be prepared to receive Him at Christmas. It is a time to let God's mercy shine through us. Pope Francis tells us that the story of Christ's birth is meant to let us know that God loves us individually and immensely.

As we consider with amazement the mystery of God becoming man in Jesus, we should slow down and contemplate His great love and mercy towards us in the Incarnation. Saint Faustina speaks of this mystery of "Mercy Incarnate" and tells us that even "heaven is amazed" by it: The Word becomes flesh; God dwells among us, the Word of God, Mercy Incarnate. By your descent, you have lifted us up to your divinity. Such is the excess of your love, the abyss of your mercy. Heaven is amazed at the superabundance of your love. No one fears to approach you now. You are the God of mercy. You have compassion on misery (Diary of St. Faustina, 1745).



As we consider with amazement the mystery of God becoming man in Jesus, we should slow down and contemplate His great love and mercy for us in the Incarnation. Saint Faustina speaks of this mystery of "Mercy Incarnate" and tells us that even "heaven is amazed" by it:

The Word becomes flesh; God dwells among us, the Word of God, Mercy Incarnate. By Your descent, you have lifted us up to Your divinity. Such is the excess of Your love, the abyss of Your mercy. Heaven is amazed at the superabundance of Your love. No one fears to approach You now. You are the God of mercy. You have compassion on misery (Diary of St. Faustina, 1745).

In the Bible, mercy is much more than forgiveness! In the Old Testament, Mercy is God's gratuitous, loyal and tender love, with its masculine aspect: hesed, which means unmerited loving kindness, and steadfast, loyal love. Its feminine aspect rahamin calls for the emotional love of a mother for the child of her womb. Exodus 34:6 declares: "YHWH is a God of rahamin (mercy) and is rich in hesed, His feminine womb love as well (cfr. Ps.51:1).

God's Mercy (rahamin and hesed) assures us that, we are unconditionally

loved as children of God, who is both, a tender-hearted Mother and the dynamic Father-Creator of every part of our being and the cosmos (VJTR, Oct 2016).

In the New Testament, God's Mercy, eleos, in Greek, is always understood in Christ. As Pope Francis put it, "Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus, reaching its culmination in him." All the great deeds of God are God's mercy-in-action!

Eleos (Mt.5:7; 18:33) is proof of the love of one's love of neighbour, so is Luke 10:37 a demonstration of eleos. We need to be channels of mercy and love steadfastly all peoples as our own, like St. Mother Teresa did. In the Songs of Christmas contained in the Christmas canticles in Luke's Gospel, the Magnificat (v.50) and the Benedictus (v.78), hesed is at work as he fulfils His messianic promises to His people, and His rahamin is expressed as tender mercy, so deep that it even reaches out to embrace the Gentiles, and "bring glad tidings to the poor...and let the oppressed free" (Is. 61:1-3).

Christmas is a feast of joyful hope, for God has become one with us in the person of his Son, true God and true man. He showed his love for us by becoming part of our world, with all its conflicts, its suffering and its poverty. Jesus is truly Emmanuel: God among us. This is a great "gift" which he brings: a divine love which heals and transforms our hearts, overcoming all uncertainty and pessimism. Our joyful contemplation of the mystery of Christmas should make us realize that, as God has become one of us, we too are called to become like God: merciful, humble, close to others, especially the poor, and ever attentive to their needs.

This Christmas, let us ask Mary, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, to help us see in our neighbour the face of Jesus, God made man. May we be in this world a ray of that light which shone forth from Bethlehem, bringing the joy and peace, compassion and mercy, to the hearts of all men and women of goodwill.



# A Room in your Heart ?

**H**ave you or a family member, found yourselves in a situation where you have suddenly been transferred to an outstation location on work. Or your children having to go out of the city or country for higher studies. You go around looking for a place to stay – a 1 Room/Kitchen or even a room, somewhere, some place. And you are met with disappointment; you are told, sorry, no room vacant, no accommodation available. And you say to yourself, oh how difficult it is to find a room here, and you throw up your hands in despair. Now what am I going to do ? Understandable - when you're stranded in a place far away from home.

Or, take for instance, the local train, when all the seats seem to be occupied and you have no place to sit. So what do you do - throw up your hands in despair and be resigned to stand throughout your journey. Or, you request those sitting, for what is called the 'fourth' seat or request somebody in the opposite row to make some adjustment in order to accommodate you. And what is their reaction ? They will say, sorry, there is no space, we cannot make room for you. And as we all know perhaps, this is a regular feature in our local trains. I was once a witness to a scene like this. As soon as the train had stopped at the platform (it happened to be the starting point), commuters jumped in and all the available seats in the compartment were occupied. Those who were not quick enough to jump in, had no option but to stand. One of them however, with hope in his heart, approached those commuters who were seated and requested them to make some adjustment to accommodate him. As is the usual response

in a situation like this, they said, sorry no place. **That man felt a little disappointed and he responded with the words, which I have still not forgotten – he said, softly (striking his breast), “sahab, jagah dil mey honi chaiye”.** The translation would mean, **“there should be place in the heart”.** **How true ! Once you make place for somebody in your heart, you will have ample space to accommodate the whole world.** And believe it or not, that man did manage to seat himself, with a little adjustment. **That, I think, is what Jesus is looking for, this Christmas ? - a place in your heart !**



**BY MELVILLE X. D'SOUZA**

More than 2000 years ago, when the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus decreed for a census to be undertaken of the entire Roman Empire, Mary & Joseph had to move out of Nazareth to their hometown of Bethlehem in order to be registered. And while they were there in Bethlehem, scriptures tell us that the time came for the baby to be born. They were caught in a situation where they were unable to find a room for the night. They could not find place at the inn or some suitable place to rest and give birth to Jesus. In a situation like this, Mary & Joseph must have definitely been in a tense state of mind at not being able to find even a small room. So many fears must have been racing through their mind. **And in a scenario like this, Mary & Joseph only managed to find a stable - it seems like Jesus was destined to be born in a lowly stable in order to show us what it means to be humble !**

**But, think of it, that night, was Jesus actually born in a stable ?** Surely, Mary & Joseph could have found



some better place, we would say. But the scriptures say they found no room in the inn, and probably they must have looked up other places but did not find a room. **I would like to say, Jesus was not born in a 'stable' that night - He was born in the hearts of those poor farmers, those shepherds, those ordinary folk !** They did not have a room to live in, but they made room for Jesus in their hearts. They opened their hearts to accommodate Mary & Joseph and the King who was to be born. No, Jesus is not looking for a palace to be born; no, he is not asking for a room in your 3-bedroom flat; no, he is not looking for a place in your 1-bedroom or 1-room apartment. No, Jesus is not looking at your assets, in fact, the greatest asset you could own, is an open heart.” And that, what Jesus is looking for - a place in your heart. **Can we open our hearts this Christmas, to Jesus and say, ‘come I have enough accommodation for you - yes, I have room in my heart.’**

We have read about Mother Teresa, a diminutive woman, who is now a saint - when she began her mission, she did not have a palace to accommodate the destitute, the sick, the lonely, unwanted, from the streets of Calcutta. **Mother Teresa opened her heart to them all and we know today, how far she has reached out - all across the world.** Missionaries of Charity – that was Mother Teresa's gift to Jesus. What is our gift to Jesus on His Birthday ? What could be better than opening your heart to accommodate Jesus ? **It's Christmas, folks, so let us then open our hearts to Jesus, He is waiting to enter our heart !**

# How Class Relates to Altruism

by Don Aguiar

**Jesus Christ was always upright, loyal and true in the service of the Lord, although as an instrument of the divine he had to play a thankless role and be misunderstood during His time.**

## The Generosity of the Poor:

### How class relates to altruism:

A slumdog, at bottom, can be a millionaire at heart

That's the life God planned for Jesus Christ to experience and go through

**T**he real reason why Jesus Christ and his foster parents Joseph and Mary accepted such a role was because they were obedient devotees to the will of God. Because when God wants to show a fantastic example to the whole world, He uses His devotee. Even if His devotee has to temporarily become His enemy, the devotee accepts that position out of love. So Joseph and Mary the foster parents of Jesus Christ understood God's plan. He wanted to show the whole world in the coming ages the most important principle in life: Whoever we are, however wealthy we are, however powerful, famous, beautiful, learned or renounced we are, if we are not on the side of God, then we will be defeated. And irrespective of who we are, if we are on the side of God we will be victorious because God is unconquerable. Yet God agrees to be conquered by the love of His devotees.

God appears in many wonderful ways according to time, place and situation. When people wonder why there are so many different religions, they are right; actually there is only one religion. Re-



ligion means obedience to law of God for developing love for God. We all are part and parcel of God and our constitutional position is to serve Him with love.

Everyone needs affection. It's the fundamental craving of the heart—to give affection and to receive affection. — To love, to serve. And in that comes the greatest enjoyment

When reading the Bible chapter on the birth of Christ, you will understand the ways God was communicating to his people the different way of expressing and receiving affection. That's why everything is created: to be utilized for the purpose of expressing our affection and receiving affection. That's all that really matters in life. If we are sick, we should try to get better; it's our duty. It's God's body, so we should make it better.

But even the healthiest people in the world are depressed, many are taking anti-depressants, having nervous breakdowns and some are committing suicide. So health alone does not make us happy.

Wealth does not make us happy, either. What if we own everything in the world but we are the only person living? Who

are you going to enjoy all the things with? We can't really have affection, which is reciprocal, with things. We have to have people. This is the nature of God and His plan for His devotees to be humble, affectionate, and helpful, to serve and spread goodwill and cheer to one and all and in that comes the greatest enjoyment.

In Christianity it is often said, "God is love." What does that mean? Devotion is the eternal natural energy. It simply means that we should repose the affection that we have within our hearts towards God in a favorable way that pleases Him. That's all that we have to do

From the Bible we learn of the affection of God for us and the simplicity and humble manner in which he sends his Son Jesus Christ into this world thru a carpenter a simple, trusting and humble man and his pregnant wife who were way down the status hierarchy. They were travelling from one place to another and during the night of their travel his wife starts getting labor pains. He hastily goes to look for a decent place for her to rest and deliver but all that he could get was a stable in an inn where his wife delivers. To keep them company were the shepherds with their cattle and the inn staff who



were also way down the status hierarchy but in spite of odds against them, offered without a second thought all that they had, to make the carpenter's wife and child comfortable and warm during that chilly wintry night.

**On Thursday night**, a fire in the mixed neighborhood of Malwani in Mumbai killed three people and injured many more. This story hit the headlines, as it should, but there is an uplifting end to the tale. While the building blazed, several absolutely unrelated individuals went inside the inferno and saved many lives.

Neither of the two, the devastation or the valor, are new; in fact, in most disaster stories they feature together. Yet, we rarely pause to wonder how people can be so selfless in a world so self-absorbed.

Carelessness and negligence cause these tragedies, but absolute kindness creates heroes from nowhere – they don't even wear masks or capes. They are usually ordinary, unremarkable people, more often than not, strangers to those afflicted and, most significantly; rarely ever posh, not even from the confirmed middle class. This story gives you the feel of the people that were around Jesus and his carpenter father and mother that night when Jesus was born and the joy and enjoyment in celebrating life.

The many annual bravery awards tell a similar story of compassion. Take, for example, the teenaged Gaurav Kawduji Sahstrabuddhe, who rescued his playmates from drowning. He came from a poor working class family.

Then there are the Sanjay Chopra and Geeta Chopra Awards that are given to persons of exceptional courage. In all nearly a thousand young people have been selected for these honors, but if one were to take these prize winners together, the overwhelming majority would be from not-so-well-off backgrounds. Courage is, probably, evenly distributed, **but the willingness to do**

**something risky to help unknown others increases as one goes down the status ladder.** This similar situation prevailed at the Inn stable as well as for Jesus from his cradle to His resurrection

There is this old sociological nugget that goes as follows: in the everyday presentation of self, the higher one rises socially, the fewer friends one has. The number of sycophants may grow, but that of true buddies, with whom you can let your hair down, decreases with every notch you climb.

The reverse then should also hold: as you go down the status hierarchy you gather more friends and fewer sycophants. Obviously, the poorer you are, the fewer inhibitions you have, and this lets you connect across class divides. Therefore, when bad times come, as they will, you are not looking for wood to knock on because you have friends by your side.

The following story has not been picked up by the press, but it is also true. Two lepers begging at a traffic light come back to push a stalled car with their forearms, carefully avoiding their bandaged hands. When the engine finally guns and the vehicle takes off they wave the driver goodbye, but that gesture goes unanswered.

No car owner within eyesight bothered, nor did any well-dressed pedestrian. If they had, that driver would have surely thanked them and exchanged polite greetings.

**This is why** a greater degree of camaraderie can be worked up at short notice among the starchless, simple people. Note, for instance, how quickly drivers make friends with their kind while waiting for their bosses to turn up; or, the number of villagers who crowd a hospital ward to help a sick friend, or relative.

Travel cattle class by train and very soon people begin chatting and, before long, start sharing food and family

news. The first class, some carriages away, has strangers sitting edgily side by side. So, if there is any bonding at all in our society, it comes from the poorer quarters. This is what makes people so hard to realize: the better off are just out of it. This is also God's ways through the birth of his Son Jesus to make us realize the same.

In elite parts of Mumbai one finds many travel agencies advertising slum trips for prosperous travelers. Many of these agencies are doing extraordinarily well; especially after the grand success of the Hollywood film *Slumdog Millionaire*. These tours are meant to showcase dreadful poverty to people who hardly know what it is about. Indian slums and alien planets are equally foreign to most Westerners.

Yet, when they return, they are not repulsed by the poverty they saw. Instead they are surprised – even astonished – at the many happy faces among the very poor. How could that be? The quick explanation is to link slum cheer to Indian culture, but that misses the point.

The truth is that poverty is friendship friendly. Those at the top will never know this joy. A slumdog, at bottom, can be a millionaire at heart, how class relates to altruism and: brings joy to the world, peace on earth and goodwill to all men - which is the way God, looked at His devotees not only to celebrate the birth of His Son Jesus Christ but to continue in living this way 24x7, 365x12.

God said that whoever believes in Him shall never perish; He will always protect His devotee. But how He protects his devotee is not according to his devotee's choice; that is according to His choice. He may protect his devotee by kicking him, punching him, taking everything away from him or He may protect his devotee by giving him the whole world. Wish our readers all the best in living the way God wants us to and – **A MERRY CHRISTMAS and a HAPPY NEW YEAR 2017.**

# Christmases I Have Known

by Bernie Tellis

When we were in school, Christmas for us revolved round the Christmas party and the Nativity play. The greatest story ever told, never varied in the telling or in the cast. I unfailingly managed the role of one of the animals in the manger and when the audience cheered lustily, I noted with some satisfaction, that I had succeeded once again in making a perfect ass of myself. I do not recall doing anything more significant than braying at the appropriate time or chewing the cud contentedly at others, but "Fools! for I also had my hour!"

Our X'mas party spirit, on the other hand, was dampened somewhat by the forbidding presence of our Class Teacher, who even though she tried to play Santa in a good cause, reassured us of her intent about as effectively as Herod did the Magi. You must remember that those were the days, long long ago, when Teachers were held in high esteem, so we were rather shocked to see them playing the buffoon. Now a days, not only are kids difficult to shock, but it's impossible to have them see us teachers as anything else.

Another thing about the festive season I loved, was going around carolling. We would go in a couple of school buses to the posh areas of SoBo, armed with a plentiful supply of collection boxes, discreetly kept out of sight until the second carol died on the air. Then with a sense of purpose that would have been the envy of Judas, we'd bear down upon our victims and coax them to cough up. To this day I have never understood why it was that though I have an excellent voice, I was always given the boxes.

Being under age – to our parents we always are – we weren't permitted to be abroad after 8 pm so the midnight

Mass was a mystery to us. Who knew what transpired at that 'godly' hour when we young 'uns were lost in innocent slumber? However, in the morning, dressed in my best hand-me-downs, my elder siblings and I, would go with Mum/Dad or the more available of the domestics (domestics for large families were a necessity, new clothes a luxury



) to morning Mass and thereafter on a round of visits to greet our elderly relatives and sample the goodies most of which we'd already pilfered from the trays sent home by them the day before! In the evening and through the week, we'd trip to the neighbourhood churches to see the cribs and compare the display. And there was star gazing, camp fires and barbecues (we lived in houses then not cramped flats). For us kids, Christmas was a festival of sight, sound and taste. Its significance eluded us. I can't say things have changed for the better over the years.

I remember one Christmas, when I was little, I came up with a crib idea that made up in enthusiasm what it lacked in imagination. It was laid atop a desk, on sand and thistle, with a shoe box dyed in mud for the manger. I'd generously sprinkled cotton wool over it all. An Australian priest friend of the family, happened to visit and asked me in mock seriousness what the cotton

represented. I said loftily that it was for the snow whereupon he said, "hadn't you better get rid of the label?" I peeped. Parts of it stuck to the cotton read: A -! Cott on. Recommended for bandages. Embarrassed, I removed it. Should have retained it because what is Christmas if not a bandage for the wounds of a bleeding, suffering hu-

manity.

In College, the Season was associated with sports. There were tournaments to be played and trophies to be won. The star of excellence was vigorously pursued and we were overjoyed when it led us to the desired spot as were the Shepherds /Wise Men in Bethlehem. And the Annual Sports Day brought into play all our finest virtues in tribute to the holy season.

Teaching thrust me into the heart of Christmas as I endeavoured to bring home to my pre-dominantly non-Christian charges its true meaning by staging O Henry and Charles Dickens, among others, and training them to render the all time favourite carols in harmony and unity.

As the years flew by, the family scattered in India and abroad, and Christmas/New Year became an occasion to re-assemble and check up on other



twigs of the family tree. There is an exchange of sad times and glad times, lean times and green times as we hark back to the Bethlehem in our lives, where it all began !

Today Christmas festivities have changed dramatically and happily, the only part that hasn't, is the Midnight ( 10 pm) Mass. And happily, I am of age to attend it ! Several years ago, our parish decided to inject a little more spectator interest in the proceedings. So they staged episodes from the Bible, starting from Adam and Eve losing Paradise, to the birth of Christ regaining it for us. The Mass was thereafter concelebrated in a gigantic Manger on stage. So well depicted and realistically performed that when a bedraggled man with matted hair and unkempt beard strode up the aisle ,beating his breast and shouting hoarsely, mothers grabbed hold of their terrified kids mistaking the man for the local vagabond. It was John the Baptist spewing fire and brimstone as he exhorted the multitude to "prepare ye the way of the Lord ! " All else was drowned in the mirth of the moment. Certainly, it was the most interesting Christmas service I've ever attended.

At these we look forward to the little changes that do not in any way detract/distract from the essence. Oft-times however, the changes are confined to sermons in 3 languages which have me nodding through the English, dozing through the Konkani and asleep in the Marathi. This prompted the preacher who espied me perhaps, to tell me the following year to write it myself! That was enough to keep me attentive at the services ever since. I trust this light-hearted stroll through Christmases past but ever present in my memory, has done the same for you ,dear readers.

Wish you and your loved ones a truly memorable Christmas and a Spirit-filled year of the Lord, 2017

# Christmas and Plato's Cave

by Denis Khan



In a 1966 novel, 'Hopping through Time', Ursula K. Le Guin wrote about a little device -- about the size of a lunchbox -- that allows its owner to communicate across land masses, even planets, in a flash.

In Plato's Cave, a group of prisoners are chained so that their legs and necks are fixed, forcing them to gaze at the wall in front of them and not look around at the cave, each other, or themselves. Behind the prisoners is a fire, and between the fire and the prisoners is a raised walkway with a low wall, behind which people walk carrying objects or puppets "of men and other living things". The people walk behind the wall so their bodies do not cast shadows for the prisoners to see, but the objects they carry do, like puppet showmen. The prisoners are only able to see the shadows cast upon the cave wall in front of them. The sounds of the people talking echo off the shadowed wall, and the prisoners falsely believe these sounds come from the shadows.

One prisoner manages to escape and discover the reality. He returns, but is blinded by exposure to the sun.

The returning prisoner, whose eyes have become acclimated to the light of the sun, would be blind when he re-enters the cave, just as he was when he was first exposed to the sun. The prisoners reject him for disturbing their comfort zone and try to kill him.

Like the prisoners In Plato's Cave, we are enmeshed in the ansible of webbed I-phones, IMAC, etc. We are ensnared by Satan, the prince of the airwaves. (Ephesians2:2);

We have replaced the temple of Socrates 'Gnosti Seuton.' -Know Thyself'. with selfies.

In the movie, 'Hacksaw Ridge'. a soldier says: "In peace sons bury their fathers; in war fathers bury their sons."

The Christmas Message of War in Peace is God's redemptive Plan in action. God Sent his Only Son, a homonym for Sun, to Die for us.

The Wise Men assumed that a king would be born in a palace. They approached Herod. Herod believed them and massacred the Holy Innocents, whose blood was shed first.

Jesus Was in such Agony, Pain and Depression that He Sweated Blood for us. (Luke22:44)

Pilate believed in Jesus. He washed his hands of 'innocent blood'. (Matthew27:24).

This culminated in the Savior's Blood Being Shed on the Cross for our redemption.

Christmas is a Greater Feast than Easter. The saddest message is that we are like many of 'His Own' who did not receive Him. (John1:11-12). When Mary accepted the role of Motherhood, she also accepted the Cross of her Son's suffering and Death. She held the crucified Body of her Jesus as lovingly as she held the Little Bethlehem Babe. Through it all, she believed that the Promises of God are always, 'Yes'. (2 CORINTHIANS 1:20)

The Promise is with us when we accept the true Message of Our Father's Eternal Love for us.

**M**y fondest memories of Christmas go back to the 1970's, my school days. Christmas was so beautiful then. There was beauty in simplicity. We had no telephones, leave alone cell phones, no cassette player or record player. We went carol singing from house to house in Bandra, the queen of the suburbs, bringing the season of goodwill and good cheer to everyone who met us. We little ones used to tag along with Fr Robin Selwyn sj, our guitar accompanist, who would jokingly tell us which houses would give us the best sweets.

At school, St Joseph's Convent Bandra, Sr Zita our Principal would start playing Christmas carols on the PA system, every morning before school hours, almost two months before Christmas. That's when I first heard the Gunterkallman choir singing Christmas medleys that I still cherish. Since we did not have a music system at

home then, we were satisfied to hear these beautiful songs on the radio and in school and we kept these wonderful melodies playing in our hearts right up to Christmas Day. I was also fortunate to have a beautiful piano, gifted by my Grandfather and I played Christmas melodies on it and my family including my little dog used to sing along. Sometimes my brother used to accompany me on the guitar.

About a month before Christmas, Hill Road was like a fairy land or Winter Wonderland.

Shops were decorated with stars and fairy lights. There was a lot of hustle

by Sunita Valladares

and bustle but not like the crowds we have today. Hiltons, a departmental store, used to have Santa outside their store, who actually came on a one-horse open sleigh and a choir of children sang beautiful Christmas songs. Our parents purchased coupons from the store so we could collect gifts from Santa.

About a fortnight to three weeks before Christmas, Grandma would clean the house thoroughly and start making her

window on Christmas Eve with the delightful Christmas melodies playing in my heart. Mum and my brother and I enjoyed making the Christmas crib with the little animals that we had got from Bianca toothpaste. We also enjoyed trimming the Christmas tree with angels, stars and baubles filling us with glee.

Christmas would never be Christmas unless we went for the Midnight Mass. We would start dressing nearly three hours before time and donning our Christmas best, the whole family would troop onto St Stanislaus grounds to

hear the Christmas Midnight Mass. We had to reach early to get the same places we sat at every year. The Athaide's used to sit in front of us and the Dias' beside us. Further away were the D'Silva's and the Noronha's.

Every family had their specific places. Most of these families have immigrated to Australia, New Zealand or Canada.

We don't see those familiar faces anymore.

At the time of the Gospel I enjoyed enacting the Christmas story in my mind, dreaming of what that first Christmas must have been like and looking at the wonderful stars twinkling in the sky above me. At the end of the Mass we would wish our fellow parishioners a "Happy Christmas" and head home with excitement knowing that Santa had left gifts for us beneath the Christmas tree. Sure enough we found them. Story books and Encyclopaedia, Craft books and Girl Guides Annuals, and books about dogs, birds and nature. We would then toast each other

## Christmas Nostalgia



Christmas sweets. We kids were only allowed to help her if we promised to be very clean and not let the dust settle on the sweets. We helped Mum beat the eggs for the Christmas cake and licked the dishes after the cake dough had been put in the oven.

The youth in our neighbourhood used to help make a huge Christmas Star which was the brainchild of Edward Lopes whom we fondly called Edoo. Sometimes he would put a crib at the centre of the star. His star always won competitions and showed up as photographs in the local Newspapers. That star is firmly etched in my memory and I loved looking at it glowing outside my



with Christmas wine and taste Mum's yummy Christmas cake.

As we grew into teenagers we went for parties after Midnight Mass, organized by the boys of the Youth group we used to belong to. The main attraction was the Disco lights. One year we partied till morning and then some of us went for the 6:30 am Mass in the Chapel on Bazaar road. We were so full of youthful energy and Christmas spirit.

On Christmas Day, my parents usually took us to my God -parent's house. They had no children so we usually went there first thing on Christmas morning. There too Santa had left gifts for us. I got beautiful dolls and my brother cars and trains. They had a record player and they usually played Jim Reeves, Bing Crosby and Ray Conniff albums for us.

During the Christmas week we were delighted to go to a Children's Christmas party at a bungalow called Vin-Rita, in Bandra. It was well organized with music, games, snacks and Santa. But right through the Christmas season our parents always made us aware of the reason for the season and how we had to reach out to our unfortunate brethren. Once we made hampers of food grains and groceries for the people living in the pipes at Bandra Reclamation. At other times we visited old age homes and orphanages, giving them simple gifts and singing songs of Christmas cheer.

As we approach Christmas this year may we never forget the little babe of Bethlehem and remember that He is the reason for the season. "Be near me Lord Jesus I ask thee to stay." And I wish everyone a Christ-filled Christmas Day.

### The Secular Citizen

Mail your articles, news, and other creations to:  
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### A Thoughtful Read -

## Joseph Stalin Brutalise The People Like A Chicken

During the Soviet dictatorship of Stalin, he (Stalin) came to one Politburo meeting with a live chicken. He started to pluck its feathers one by one off.

The chicken quacked in pain, blood oozing from its pores. It gave out heartbreaking cries but Stalin continued without remorse plucking feather after feather until the chicken was completely naked. After that, he threw the chicken on the ground and from his pockets, took out some chicken feed and started to throw it at the poor creature. It started eating and as he walked away, the chicken followed him and sat at his feet feeding from his hand.

Stalin then told members of his party leadership "This chicken represents the people, you must disempower them, brutalise them, beat them up and leave them. If you do this and then give them peanuts when they are in that helpless and desperate situation, they will blindly follow you for the rest of their life. They will think you are a hero forever. They will forget that, it is you who brought them to that situation in the first place."

**Today Stalin is no more but.....**

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# Spiritual Journey For A Christian

by K C Thomas



*"When I grow old and gray, do not leave me . O God,give me time to declare your might to all generations to come. "*

*Ps 71;18*

*" My Grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness "*

*I Cor 12:9*

I have been young and the glory of the young is one's strength; now I am old, but the splendour of the old is the gray hair covering the wisdom. I have been delving in my mind for some kind of a grip to strengthen my confidence and spirituality as the mind is like an unfathomable ocean with a concourse of all sorts of questions, confusion, confutation as well as faith in the unseen God, fear of the future and myriad more thoughts. I have churned this ocean and what I could recover through my humble and unskilled efforts are spread in few words below. I am a retired person aged 85. My intention in writing this article is to convey my thoughts to my brothers and sisters who are my contemporaries, though it is equally applicable to all in younger generations too.

There is so much beauty to mine from the Scriptures, but too often we don't make the time to slow down and reflect on the immensely valuable, mature and helpful words of God. We all claim to be Christians, faithful, religious, traditional etc etc. I am no exception, I am very unworthy, I am aware. But I ask some questions to myself, like----

Is friendship with Jesus, the Centre of my Christian experience ?

Am I really committed to Christ and His Church ?

Have I a deeper encounter with the Bible, especially the many utterances of Jesus ?

Am I mentally renouncing everything



and getting ready for an interview before God whenever he calls without notice ?

My answer for all these questions is a big "NO". I had never seriously desired to follow Lord Jesus Christ or to grow in holiness, though I have been attending Mass and receiving sacraments or listening to sermons. Still I call myself a practicing Christian even claiming to belong to the most ancient Church in India founded by a disciple of Jesus Christ. My friendship / closeness to Christ has to expand from the "Sunday Christian" standard ; and my mind, word and deed should have the smell of intense faith in Jesus . His physical and spiritual proximity must be felt by my soul. The great question is as to how this can be brought about.

Firstly we should cultivate a desire to listen to the Word of God. Our mind should become the fertile ground to receive the word of God.. " The seeds that fell on the good soil brought forth some a hundredfold, some sixty, some

thirty" Math 13:8 --- By alertness, by willingness for abnegation of everything undesirable, of everything unfriendly to Christ and by contemplation ----- I mean a conversation with Christ.

Secondly, A deep faith in the word of God is not fully dissolved and absorbed in the mind. While reading the Scripture, confusion, impossibility of certain things, the irreconcilability of certain ideas with current world... all these come in the way. Even if basically we accept everything, the confusion blurs our thoughts and does not help in the spiritual growth. How to change this mind set ? The thought that the word of God is true and powerful must be in-laid in our hearts. None of the words spoken by Jesus can be meaningless as He is God. " If Christ was not at all that He said He was ,namely the Son of the living God ,the Word of God in flesh, then He was not "just a good man " ; then He was a knave, a liar, a charlatan, and the greatest deceiver who ever lived. But if He is what He claimed to be, a Saviour, a Redeemer, then we have a virile Christ and a leader worth following ". - Life Of Christ by Blessed Bishop Fulton Sheen.-

If we interpret anything according to our wisdom, it need not be the right one. For this we can only rely on His Church's teachings (Magisterium ), commentaries and interpretations. By this process we may change our perception and understanding.

Thirdly, renouncing everything should not be a sort of publishing that we renounce wealth etc etc for others' knowledge, but it should be a genuine mental detachment from possessions and all desires. He has fully committed himself to us " Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have , for He has said " I will never leave you or forsake you". ( Hebrew 13:5 ) This too depends on the



mature contentment, sincere detachment from everything, people, property, personal attachments and affinity in the mind. This does not mean that aspirations and achievements which are morally and legally permissible are sinful. Our feeling of insecurity raises its head always. Here an absolute faith in Jesus who said "Fear not, I am with you always till the end of time" is the only real solution. Whatever it be, wherever we are, whatever situation we are in, if Jesus is with us there is no need for any fear. Life or death, He is the Master and we are safe and can fully rely on Him.

Jesus tells "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect" (Luke 5:48). Is this possible at all? Left to our resources, it certainly is impossible. It is totally unattainable by our efforts. But with God all things are possible even our conversion and transformation. It is a gift of God, we are dependent on his grace. We read in Luke 18: 27 "What is impossible for mortals is possible for God". St Paul says "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." (Phil 4:13) Most of us often look at our busy lives and responsibilities and conclude that perfection is not meant for us. If our

lives and responsibilities are guided by Jesus's teaching, perfection is not far off. Who knows how much longer we will be alive on this earth. We don't know how long we will live and what future holds for us. The purpose of our creation is that we may be fully united with God. It is only through Jesus we can, little by little, get transformed and made ready for that union. It is attaining a kind of spiritual adulthood, that is constant awareness of God's presence and habitual conformity to God's will. Here we may be able to find deep and abiding joy, an ever alive love of God and others, profound humility and freedom from the fear of suffering. The suffering is related to joining in the sufferings of Christ for his redeeming grace. His grace only can strengthen us in our spiritual journey. "But my face you cannot see, for no man sees me and still lives" (Ex:33:20). St Augustine says that our souls long for God and they get happiness only when they ultimately rest in God. So now is the acceptable time to think of our spiritual journey and direct it on the right path. God is love. So our spiritual journey has to be about the love of God and neighbour and its fulfillment.

Are we willing for conversion to start the spiritual journey? Repentance for all the sins for which we are responsible is the primary requirement. Repentance restores the sonship we have lost by sins. Once the seed of spirituality sprouts in our hearts, we have to listen to the Church. We cannot ignore or

omit the love in marriage. It is holy because its origin, purpose, advantage and fruitfulness are holy. Love has to be unconditional. Love has been beautifully and meaningfully defined by St Paul. (1 Cor 13) If our love is dependent of the quantity and quality of others' love to us, it is not love but selfishness. We have to cultivate, humility, selflessness, a willingness to suffer, looking at the crucified Christ.

It is never late. Age and possessions should not come in the way. There are many who are reasonably healthy, there are some whose spouses are ill or they are no more, there are some who are feeble and worn out, there are some who have no one to depend on, and some who are not cared for by anyone.... Whatever be our age or position in life, we must start our spiritual journey if not already commenced. We must bear in mind the Biblical words "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul?" when excuses like "No time", "Busy days" etc come up in our mind. We must pray for God's grace for our repentance and conversion and detachment as well as for the incessant pursuance for holiness. Our every word and every deed should be helpful to our growth in humility and holiness. Our meditation and our conversation with Christ will give us strength, serenity and joy. Our aim, our target, is heaven, the vision of the visage of God. May the Joy of Christmas help the growth of Spirituality in us. May God bless us all.

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# PURATHCHI THALAIVI 'RIP'



by Ladislaus L  
D'Souza

**T**here's so much being made everywhere, particularly in the press, about the passing of Jayalalitha, CM of Tamil Nadu (TN), bordering on hysteria, that one cannot help but wonder at the superficiality of it all, what with the President and the Prime Minister, apart from the who's-who brigade in politics flying in to pay their last respects at the cost of the exchequer.

Agreed, one does not speak ill about the dead. But to tout that she made TN a very progressive and developed state would be far too farfetched. That'd certainly have been great news were it not for the fact that the largest settlements of any community in the major metropolises of India are believed to comprise of the Tamilians, Mumbai probably topping the list. It is also being announced from the rooftops that Amma gave food and laptops and a lot else! Wow! What largesse!

Analytically, if the claims about TN being progressive in terms of development are true, why are there so many people from that state living in filth outside TN, eking out a living by the kind of work they do? Instead of mourning Amma's death today why didn't the Tamilians in Dharavi and in the numerous other Tamil padas in Mumbai and



elsewhere in the country, return in the course of all these years gone by to their hometowns/villages in TN and enjoy the largesse she is supposed to have made available to her people, please? They too would have got a lot of food and laptops and what have you, putting the governments of other states to shame.

What takes the cake is the report in Mumbai Mirror [7 Dec 2016] about the 10,500 saris and 750 pairs of footwear apart from jewellery seized from her in 2015. Was she trying to compete with Imelda Marcos of the Philippines? Imelda and her disgraced president-husband were known to have left behind between them some 1985 pairs of footwear. That of course was the President and the First Lady of the country no less. But for the chief minister of a state in the Indian Union to have been in possession of such stuff is mind-boggling. Both India and the Philippines are poor and developing in many respects and its unbecoming of

those in power to indulge in such a vulgar display of wealth. In the Philippines the powers-that-be unfittingly gave the dislodged despot a burial in the Heros' cemetery whereas in TN the people under the illusion of having been under the motherly care of a benign film star paved her funeral path with tears galore. What a shame!

Our politicians talk so much about culture. In which culture would you find men prostrating before a woman? The very thought and sight of such servility makes one nauseous. And to think that Indian men who don't exactly have any respect for their own wives, brazenly went down on their bellies in homage to their idol Amma J Jayalitha! What a crying shame!! When oh when will our countrymen and women learn to distinguish between God and human, truth and lies, reality and illusion, uprightness and dishonesty? When will we learn to discern as to when we are being given our dues and when fooled, bullied, 'rip'ped apart?



# This Christmas, Spare a Thought for poor old Santa!



**D**uring Christmas, Santa Claus dominates the children's world. This is the story of what happened to 'Father Christmas' this year. Resting at the North Pole during the rest of the year, his reindeer grew fat and lazy grazing on the succulent moss and some of them just wandered off in search of greener pastures in Canada and Australia. Due to Global Warming, the top ice sheet had melted more than usual, giving way to a rich crop of moss and shrubs, much to the delight of these gentle animals. That red-nosed Rudolph, from the moment he had been chosen to lead the team at the sleigh, had dominated the reindeer games and now he had led the pack away from its usual grazing ground, putting Santa to a lot of trouble. So Santa this year had to travel longer distances over a landscape dotted with moss and shrubs, turning his reindeer chase into an obstacle race at the winter Olympics!

The usual activity of rounding up the reindeer for that important trip to the countries of the world, loaded with gifts for kids, begins at the first sign of winter. By the time Santa locates every reluctant reindeer and lures it back to be hitched to his sleigh, a pile of children's letters normally gets accumulated at his doorstep. As he grows older, his eye-sight too has started failing. Poor old Santa had received a new pair of spectacles from the newly-born Jesus, as a gift for himself after his arduous trip round the world last year. This year he was indeed grateful for the new spectacles because the cold this year was not so bone-chilling and he had begun to perspire in his thick heavy suit and all that hair on his head and face. The perspiration was running



BY VERA ALVARES

down his brow and clouding his new spectacles! Yet, he had to read the children's letters to know what each child wanted this Christmas. After all, that was his job...wasn't it?

Writing to Santa asking for a particular gift is the annual practice with the kids all over the world. Even with nuclear shrinking families, the demand for gifts had gone up lately because unlike olden times, kids know their minds from the moment they are born. Having completed all other preparations, Santa set out to deal with the children's letters and prepare his shopping list. Living in his little snow-clad paradise he had not heard of Global warming, Climate change and the new technologies ruling the world. To add to his troubles he was sadly unaware that there was a great mix-up in his letters due to the recent postal strike in Norway. The pile-up of letters included some addressed to God.....

The first letter read, "Dear God, I bet it is very hard for you to love all of everybody in the whole world. There are only 4 people in our family and I can never do it. But I promise you I will try it this Christmas - Nina".

Swiftly, Santa slit open the second letter only to be equally stunned- "Dear God, my Granny died recently. Instead of letting people die and having to make new ones, why don't you just keep the ones you have now? I'll miss her this Christmas- Gina." It gladdened him to see that the next one was addressed to him, but his joy was short-lived for the letter read, "Dear Santa, was that really my letter you read? I had asked for a puppy, not a baby brother. Do you not know the difference between a puppy and a baby? -Johnny". By now dear Santa was totally perplexed, cleaning his spectacles for the umpteenth time, he bravely read on, "Oh man ! Can you give me an iPod this year as I have completed ten years? I've never asked for any electronics before, check it out man.... if you give me an iPod, I'll give you anything, even the useless gifts you gave me in the past years, the dictionary and those Badminton and painting sets...or maybe pay you from my account in Panama... Ciao! - Big B."

In desperation, Santa tore his hair, his clothes and decided to retire that very year. In these days of consumerism and materialism how can Christmas be Xmas without gifts and someone to give them? So then Tim Allen was approached for the job of Santa Claus ! Yes, watch him on your TV sets this Xmas like every year!

*Wishing you a Blessed Season! May the Peace and Joy of Christmas reign in our hearts!*

Vera Alvares

# Modesty A Christian Virtue

by Rose K.

**W**hat is modesty ? When and how did it originate ? The dictionary says that modesty is caring not to do or say anything impure or improper in speech, dress and behaviour. In to-day's society any of these definitions of modesty may be seen as negative, since we often focus on self, self-esteem, self respect and self expression. One who lives and behaves in simplicity may most probably remain something very common and unnoticed.

The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and guard it. Adam was happy to see one of his own kind in Eve ,when she was presented to him. The Bible says that the man and the woman were both naked but not embarrassed(Gen.2:25) Eve appreciated the nature and the beauty displayed in the vegetation when she looked at the tree. Imagine the happiness the couple had in their honeymoon days in the most beautiful garden ----may be much more beautiful than any of the modern parks and resorts on account of the celestial light and glory supplied by the presence of God. When one evening God visited their place, they hid themselves among the trees. To the God's question"Where are you ?", Adam replied that he was afraid and hid from God because he was naked. What does this mean ? A thought had sprung up in Adam that the display of

nakedness was something wrong and needed covering. God had respected their feeling and He did not want them to continue in the wrong. So He made clothes out of animal skins for Adam and` Eve and He clothed them



(Gen.3:21) The bodies of Adam and Eve are the handiwork of God who is perfect. After clothing them God said that the man had knowledge of what is good and what is bad. It is said in the Bible that mankind had spread all over the world and there was a time when some of the supernatural beings took the girls they liked because they were beautiful. What was the beauty ? It may be the beautiful body of the girls. May be their captivating wholesomeness! God then did not allow this , saying that He disapproved the wickedness of the people he had created. ( Gen. 6:1-5 and 12 ) He wondered how evil their thoughts all the time. God looked at the world and saw that it was evil for the people were all living evil lives

Human consciousness of nakedness has brought about a need to cover. Originally they started covering their genitals as if that was the centre of nakedness. Also they had difficulty in having skins of animals as then fabric was not invented. Slowly human expectation grew and it has shaped the cloth culture. Even now the tribals use the minimum quantity of clothes to cover the minimum space of the body. In the course of time the thought of fashion arose and designs and shaping of garments have appeared. Tailoring and knitting were added knowledge. The civilized world came to a standard in this regard and the standard more or less conformed to the idea that female body needed suitable cover to avoid unnecessary and inappropriate optical intrusion of males. However the modern trend in some seems to encourage a disregard to

the traditional concept on modesty. So it is necessary to go into detail in some measure

. It may be better every daughter answers the following with a ""NO"

- 1 Is the top so sheer that others can see inner wear or so low cut allowing the cleavage to show. ?
- 2 Does the dress ride so low that the underclothes can be seen when seated ?
- 4 Does the dress reveal your abdomen and back ?
- 5 Does any of the dresses have sexu-



ally suggestive slogans on them ?

Two main reasons for the covering of body are hiding nakedness and protecting the body from the inclemency of the weather. The covering of the body to avoid lustful look from males was an unwritten traditional understanding about the females' habiliments. The exposure of women's body specially certain areas like the bare shoulders, the various degrees of chest and cleavage etc is considered not in good taste as it is likely to generate the base instincts of males and may cause inappropriate behaviour in them. In this connection it may be worthwhile quoting the comment of a Catholic boy, which I happened to read recently in an English magazine. He told his friends " I want a girl who I can respect and who will respect the fact that I want to guard my eyes against lusting after her body before we are married'

Why should you prefer the charms of another man's wife ? (Prov. 5:18-21) What is the modern view ? The modern view is that ostentation is not wrong even if it is to attract people. Sexual lustful thoughts are not considered as wrong or sinful. However what is the Christian dimension on this subject ? When charms are displayed in the exposure of female body (or even covering seductively), the male get a chance to get the thoughts of evil people who lead evil lives. Mature persons can go smart without sophistication , elegant without ostentation, decorous without stiffness , carefree and friendly without boisterousness. Islam prohibits immodesty in dress, but the fundamentalists interpret in a narrow way , infringing even the normal rights of the woman and insisting full cover of the body excluding the eyes. In spite of all opposition to the forced hijab, the real reason and principle behind the word "modesty" cannot be ignored. The advancement of civilization has revolutionised the thoughts on fashion and design. The purpose of the revealing dress exposing the female body in an inappropriate way is said to be to have "an attractive look" or "a good

look". However knowing the human mind , the effect of all such advancement of civilization , Jesus said " You have heard that you shall not commit adultery..... but I tell you ,if you look at a woman with lust , you have already committed adultery" The lust springs up from the mind, but the sight of human flesh in the inappropriate way is like fuel near fire. So if anyone who subscribes to the "fuel" is guilty. The sublimation of the wrong feelings or lust is rendered difficult. People who believe in Christ's teachings are bound to abstain from wearing such scandalous dresses and provocative dresses. In the past an authoritarian interior judge in man (man includes woman) demanded obedience to parents ,insisted on sexual purity and advocated high morals. The interior judge is replaced by "Relativism" as once observed by Pope Benedict XVI. The interior judge in man no longer uses Jesus or Mary or St Teresa to keep the standard but prefers celebrities or a television anchor. Courage, conviction and immense faith in Jesus Christ are needed to resist wrong trends. The parents who do not train their children by their examples and counsel, specially their teenage daughters, are equally guilty. The world may spurn our ideas and ridicule us, but can we fail to bear witness to Jesus Christ? Should we not be counter cultural at times ?

We can also display modesty in our life.... Quietness, humility and simplicity are values to be grasped and sought after. The Bible even talks about this.

Colossians 3.12 says " Since you are the people of God, you must clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience". A life of modesty is lived towards God and towards each other. Towards God, we recognize him as the source of all our gifts ,abilities and strength. We can do nothing apart from him. We are fully dependent on him for everything we need. Towards each other, we show our modesty by honouring others before ourselves . We have to allow others to have the place of prominence. Phillippians 2:3 says "Dont do anything for selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble towards one another always considering others better than yourselves "

Most of us do not naturally possess an attitude of modesty as characterised by humility and simplicity. We seek recognition and attention. We want others to honour us. If we follow Christ, we will divest ourselves of all self-seeking and submit ourselves to God. Living a life of modesty is a personal determination. We must patiently wait for God to give the rewards. He sees all that we do. It is not that we become doormats or cast off , when we are humble. I Peter 5:6 says " God resists the proud but shows favour to the humble. Humble yourselves, then, under God's mighty hand, so that He will lift you up in his own good time". Let us be proud of our culture that upholds the teaching of Christ, even if thousands around us go towards modernity that disregards the traditional Christian teachings on modesty and humility.

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# Kanara Christmas - 2016

**J**oyful times are unforgettable in the limited span of the human life. Changing seasons have been marked by various celebrations and observances unlimited in tune with faith and nature. In our secular land that is India, among other festivals, Christmas is a blend of Occidental and Oriental traditions. We see today the world over an intermingling of cultures and habits, global thinking and local living! The reasoning is practical, political and social. Probably the evolving reference to "Christa Jayanthi" by folk of our land is not a surprise. It is also the "Jayanthi" birth, of another NEW YEAR, of hope....of JOY!

Even with prices of everything sky rocketing, the needs of people have shot to unrealistic mega levels. The Malls have become a big centre of attraction with their high profile entertaining ambience, you see all kinds of people of all ages rushing to savour the exotic. Then the commercial range of gifts and club class entertainment is a big draw for people. But, for the low income groups these are unreachable, sad they are not considered and cared for.



by Ivan Saldanha-Shet

Christianity is not new to this land of ancient legend, tradition and history that is India. Arriving here, even before crossing into Europe. A well known apostle of Christ, Thomas a Syrian, reached South Kerala in 52 AD and a few Namboodri's became followers of his teachings. In the 16th century the Portuguese traders arrived with Catholic priests. From Goa and Konkani, some Konkani/Sarswat migrants settled in present day coastal Karnataka and Kerala accepted the new faith and are the ascendants of pres-

ent day Konkani Christians now spread all over the world. The ancient Port of Mangalore or Kudla for Tuluvas, gave a welcome to the industrious, intelligent community of proven integrity, and they became a part of this land in full measure. Celebrations of feasts got great importance and was looked forward to by people in general!

For Konkani Catholics this season is 'Nathalache Festh' or 'Feast of the Nativity'. Many dream of home at Christmas, a long journey of love home ward. The thought of green palms along shores of the Arabian Sea was nostalgic. Heart thumping with sentiment for a special time with Mai & Aab, Grandma & Grandpa, and relatives. Children (now fewer), gleefully making plans for 'Nektr' (star) or 'Guddeep' (lantern) with bamboo and coloured tissues, and decorations to match. The big attraction is the elaborate 'CRIB' (Gardanache Gotto). A nice prominent spot, in the once sprawling garden it was a big affair, imaginatively in the heights of imagination, Babe Christ's

Bethlehem! Sheep and Shepard, winding red roads with small streams, log bridges dotted with travelers and cattle, tiny homes and inns to the infinity of imagination. Not to miss the active fountains, water falls strategically placed, 'cowshed' with angels Joseph with Mary and tiny loved Babe Jesus in the manger, a touching sight that unforgettably warms the hearts in adoration!

The extended family lending hands to mix cake, help with the 'Kuswar' - *kalkals / kiddio, gulio* (jaw breakers) rose cookies, coconut sweets, *nevrio, guava cheese, tukdio, binda* or Vimto drink.... and much more! In the past made at home by loving hands, shared with family, relatives, neighbors and all







alike was pride and merriment of the season. To also note in today's modern India it is an attraction fast become a 'Seasonal icon'. Santa Claus, the Christmas tree and decorations are a tradition of great external significance. Let not the spiritual and deeper meaning not be lost.

Today Christmas is X'mas, and comes off the shelves of Malls and markets, all year round. Weddings, get-togethers, visits, plays, picnics and fun filled activities are recalled by the now aged and aging in arm chairs. High density commercialization, development and

transformed mind-sets of 'GenNext', has compelled the festive spirits to newer forms and shapes. Things and places of old vanishing, the face of Kanara particularly Mangaluru and Udupi has radically changed. Ecology rapidly distorted and beyond redemption. Old traditions, customs and legends passing on to future generations. The new replaces old, what will Kanara be in the New Year..... in the future? What will the coming NEW YEAR 2017 bring? Many questions ..... yet, the sacred Greetings and Celebrations bring all that's positive to each and all with hope and JOY!!

## Don't use "Season's greetings"

Christmas: Please don't use "Season's greetings" during Christmas. This term is for those who do NOT recognise the holy Name of "Christ". Christians should not hesitate to say "Christmas" season. It's also wrong to use the term 'X'mas. 'X' means unknown in mathematical terms. As Christians, we know and believe it's the birthday of our Saviour Jesus Christ. We know Him. So let's use the term "Christmas" only.

Use of the image of 'Santa Claus' to greet on Christmas is unchristian. Christmas is birthday of Christ not of Santa. This is used for the commercial benefits in the wide world. As Christians let's send greetings with the significant image of Baby Jesus in the Crib or Baby Jesus with Joseph and Mary. The true spirit of Christmas will make this year's Christmas, 'A lovely Birthday remembrance of Jesus Christ our Saviour'. The NEW YEAR 2017 will fill with blessings and JOY.

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# Christmas Will Be A Celebration Forever

by Melvyn Brown



**W**e are approaching a joyful and historic moment in the Christian faith, the awe inspiring hour when God comes to us: St. John put it so aptly, "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." (Jn. 1:14).

Thanks to the events set in motion, Christmas is blessed to be a celebration forever. Even as we meditate on Christ's coming, we are happily reminded of the prophet Isaiah's words, "Yes, there will be an abundance of flowers and singing and joy!...for the Lord will display his glory there, the excellency of our God. With news bring cheer to all discouraged ones. Encourage those who are afraid. Tell them, 'Be strong, fear not, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you.'" (Is.35:2-4).

The seemingly endless- long yearning will soon be fulfilled as it has been for decades: the day draws nearer, the hour approaches, the time will soon arrive when the people of God will sing in praise of the Messiah. The path to redemption and salvation will soon become the road to His love, mercy and forgiveness. Rejoice, for Christ comes.

The psalmist says, "Your awe-inspiring deeds shall be on every tongue... Everyone will tell about how good you are, and sing about your righteousness... All living things shall thank you, Lord, and your people will bless you." (Ps.145:6-10).

Over the span of two thousand years, Christ's birth has been the guiding light

in a unified message, inspiring generations to belief to the one true faith under Jesus. We embark on a spiritual voyage year after year pledged to evangelise the Word for His greater glory. As the psalmist declared, we sing about the Lord's righteousness, and proclaim His deeds to the world. We do, indeed thank God and bless Him.

All four Gospels reveal the truth of His coming, for Christ's birth is bigger and more seismic than a myth or legend. In the Gospel of John, the woman said, "Well, at least I know that the Messiah will come – the one they call Christ – and when he does, he will explain everything to us." (Jn.4:2).

The Lord is coming and we must be still and listen. James, a servant of God tells us to be patient, "patience in suffering,

look at the Lord's prophets...we know how happy they are now because they stayed true to him..." (Jas:4:10-11).

Advent has been a time for recollection, preparation, and for making a decision to be a better person. Traditionally, we associate advent with the fulfillment of a prediction made thousands of generations ago – that the Messiah will come, and he will be the King of Kings – Marana Tha!

Throughout the four weeks of advent Christians have been successful in making their name a verb. In quiet and in tolerance we radically change the world – forgiving, blessing and praying for those who force and use terror to dominate the earth and its people. We do this in Jesus' name.



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# Peace, Love and Joy of Christmas

**E**very Christmas, we need to ask ourselves whether the incarnation of the second person of the Holy Trinity through the virginal birth of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem, 2000 years ago, has made any significant change in our spiritual lives and the world in general. When we say that what happened 2000 years ago was the greatest event in human history, are we convinced that, unlike other manifestations of the divine in other religions, Jesus Christ, in human form was the fullest and the most unique manifestation of the Absolute Godhead, where God came to dwell among us as the "Word made flesh"? Has the incarnational dimension of Christmas taken root in our hearts to put us on the path of love, forgiveness and compassion, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus, or is Christmas just another annual festival of eating, drinking and merrymaking for 12 days in a row.

Christmas is the celebration of the mystery of God's incarnate love. The infancy narrative of Luke testifies to the unique event of his birth in Bethlehem (Lk. 2: 1-20). Both Matthew and Luke speak of the divinity of Jesus from the moment of his birth by virtue of being conceived by the power of the Holy spirit. (Mat, 1:18-20), Lk, 1: 35). For Mark, Jesus was the Son of God at the time of his baptism (Mk, 1: 11). And for John, the pre-existence of Jesus is affirmed in the opening verses of his gospel.

The birth of Jesus is the good news of peace, love and joy for the whole world, announced by the heavenly choir of angels to the shepherds who sang praises of God "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will" (Lk 2: 14). It was the fulfillment of God's promise of the Mes-



BY A. F. NAZARETH

siah who came to establish God's kingdom of peace, love, equality and justice. Jesus came in poverty, not in power and lived a life in the service of others, healing, forgiving and revealing the love of the Father through his works of mercy and compassion. Jesus never preached about peace

because he was peace himself. The peace which Jesus gives is different from the peace strategies of the world where wars are fought and nuclear weapons stockpiled as security under the guise of ensuring peace. The beatitudes of Jesus invite us to experience God's peace by living and working for peace.

Every Christmas we are also reminded of God's unconditional love for us. God so loved the world that he gave us his only son Jesus Christ. Jesus also gave his disciples a new commandment to "love one another as I have loved you" (Jn.13:34). Let us therefore celebrate this great event of Christmas with love,



by welcoming Jesus into our heart and proclaiming and sharing his message of peace and love with one another. Let the light, joy and peace brought into the world by Him, help us to put an end to the hatred, violence and killings witnessed around us. It is only when we experience the presence of God in our midst, The God-made man, Jesus Christ (Emmanuel) that we will have lasting peace and joy.

Merry Christmas to all

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**'We do our best...  
God will do the rest'**

# Peace On Earth To Men Of Goodwill

by Lestor Pinto



In the last few years, there have been several events that have cast a shadow of despair and gloom on our world. Around the globe, we observe the promises of a new world lost in deadly conflict and renewed war. In Syria, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Sudan, Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan, the Middle East, India, parts of Europe, USA and many other places, the world too often has watched as our sisters and brothers were killed because of their religion, race, tribe or political position. Our families are torn by violence. Our communities are destroyed by violence. Our faith is tested by violence. Violence -- in our homes, our schools and streets, our nation and borders and the world -- is destroying the lives, dignity and hopes of millions of human beings. The celebration of violence in much of our media, music and even video games is poisoning our children. Beyond the violence in our streets is the violence in our hearts. Hostility, hatred, despair, unforgiveness and indifference are at the heart of a growing culture of violence.

Our society seems to be growing numb to human loss and suffering. Violence in our culture is fed by multiple forces -- the disintegration of family life, lack of respect for life, loss of moral values, rise and spread of various terror outfits, grinding poverty, powerlessness, media influences, growing substance abuse, the easy availability of weapons, the rise of gangs and increasing youth violence.

These events, however compel us this Christmas to focus our attention to Jesus Christ -- the Prince of Peace who is truly Emmanuel -- "who was made flesh and dwelt among us". (Jn 1:14).

This Christmas we can choose to turn away from violence; we can build communities of greater peace. It begins with a clear conviction: respect for life. It is a fundamental moral principle flowing from our teaching on the dignity of the human person. It is an approach to life that values people over things. Respect for life must guide the choices we make as individuals and as a society: what we do and won't do, what we value and consume, whom we admire and whose example we follow, what we support and what we oppose. Respect for human life is the starting point for confronting a culture of violence. We must affirm and protect all life, especially the most vulnerable in our midst.

But it is not just our policies and programming that must change; it is our hearts. We must condemn not only the killing, but also the abuse in our homes, the anger and unforgiveness in our hearts and the glorification of violence in movies and music. It is time we believe in the words of Deuteronomy 30:19, to "Choose life so that you and your descendants may live ...". We must join with St. John Paul II to "proclaim, with all the conviction of our faith in Christ and with an aware-

ness of our mission, that violence is evil, that violence is unacceptable as a solution to problems, that violence is unworthy. Violence is a lie, for it goes against the truth of our faith, the truth of our humanity."

God's wisdom, love and the Commandments can show us the way to live, heal and reconcile. "Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal" are more than words to be recited; they are imperatives for our common good. Our faith challenges each of us to examine how we can contribute to an ethic which cherishes life, puts people before things, and values kindness and compassion over anger and vengeance.

In a world filled with war and violence, it is difficult to see how Jesus could be the all-powerful God who acts in human history and is the embodiment of peace. But physical safety and political harmony don't necessarily reflect the kind of peace He's talking about. (Jn:14:27). The Hebrew word for peace, "Shalom", is often used in reference to an appearance of calm and tranquility of individuals, groups, and nations. The Greek word "Eirene" means "unity and accord"; Paul uses "Eirene" to describe the objective of the New Testament church. But the deeper, more foundational meaning of peace is "the spiritual harmony brought about by an individual's restoration with God."



In our sinful state, we are enemies with God (Rom 5:10). “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). Because of Christ’s sacrifice, we are restored to a relationship of peace with God (Rom 5:1). This is the deep, abiding peace between our hearts and our Creator that cannot be taken away (Jn 10:27–28) and the ultimate fulfillment of Christ’s work as “Prince of Peace.”

But Christ’s sacrifice provides more for us than eternal peace; it also allows us to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit, the Helper who promises to guide us (Jn 16:7, 13). Further, the Holy Spirit will manifest Himself in us by having us live in ways we couldn’t possibly live on our own, including filling our lives with love, joy, and peace (Gal 5:22–23). This love, joy, and peace are all results of the Holy Spirit working in the life of a believer. They are reflections of His presence in us and through us. And, although their deepest, most vital result is to have us live in love, joy, and peace with God, they can’t help but to spill over into our relationships with people.

In a world marked by violence and conflict, drenched in blood, wounded by war, and sickened by hatred, in the clutches of sin, Jesus presents Himself at Christmas as the Prince of Peace. He came not just to talk about peace; He is peace. He gives us inner peace because wherever Jesus reigns, joy triumphs over sorrow, love prevails over hatred and hope raises its flag where despair once reigned.

This Christmas, Jesus as Prince of Peace presents to us a real – life challenge: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” The challenge is daunting. May we accept this call of Jesus and as the angels sing, “Glory to God in the highest”, let our hearts respond, “Peace on earth to men of goodwill”.

## Forgiveness connects us with the Divine

Christmas represents the first divine act of forgiveness on this earth. That Baby, born of the Holy Spirit and a poor teenager with no fame or wealth, reflects both the ordinary and the inconceivably transcendent. The forgiveness we exercise daily connects us with the Divine and assures us of our perpetual identity as sons and daughters of the omnipotent God. For His highest virtue—His love—was manifest in the Christmas manger, and we, the beneficiaries of that generous gift, are invited to share it with those who have offended us.

The heavens opened that night to some humble shepherds, to whom the angels announced the arrival of the Son of God: “ ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!’ ”<sup>2</sup> This blessing reminds us of the name Isaiah assigned to the Son of God—“Prince of Peace”<sup>3</sup>—identifying the Baby with the Messiah. The angels were amazed at what God had done through this Child, who would bring salvation to a humanity alienated from its Maker. The walls of the celestial city could not contain the boundless joy in heaven, so the angelic praises spilled over onto the earth! The divine Child was none other than the Savior promised throughout the Old Testament, the Prince of Peace who would reconcile a fallen world with its Creator.

The word in the original Greek for peace carries the same meaning as the Hebrew shalom. The Hebrew word does not simply mean “absence of war or conflict.” Rather, it points to the presence of a social harmony. Those who receive this Messianic peace are the “people of good will” or the people who are recipients of God’s good will.<sup>4</sup> The passage also suggests that those who receive God’s good will are to show that same good will toward their neighbors.

# Why Is There Such A Sudden Change?

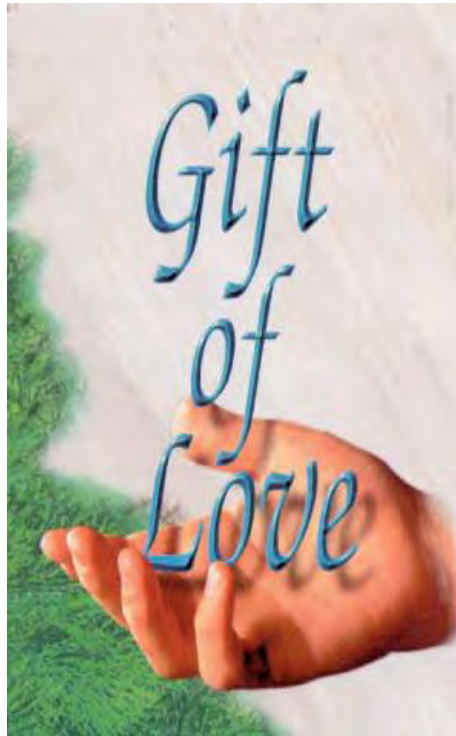
by Don Aguiar



**G**od has no philosophy of non violence, but He has a way of life which you can call reverence of life. And this is a totally different perspective. Non violence simply says don't kill others. Do you think that is enough? It is only a negative statement, don't kill others, don't harm others. Is that enough? Reverence for life says share, give your joy, your peace, your bliss. Whatever you can share, share. Keeping this in mind He sent His son to be born of man and women on a cold wintry night in a stable for this very purpose. This very night/day is celebrated as Christmas.

If you are reverent in life then it becomes worship. Then everywhere you feel existence alive. Then watering a tree becomes worship, feeding a guest becomes worship and you are not obliging anybody, you are not doing a service, you are simply enjoying yourself. The same way some people are enjoying torturing or being selfish, you are enjoying sharing.

There is a kind of world that we want. There is a kind of world we will inherit. We have a few known knows about the world we want – on how to ACTUALLY practice reverence of life. I say "actually" because there are still plenty of people out there who don't understand the meaning of reverence of life in Christianity. My goal is to make sure those believers and non believers don't view Christianity as just an entertaining religion and the celebrating of Christian feast like Christmas to be celebrated with entertainment or a day to attend Christmas service to complete their spiritual obligation with lack of respect and reverence or dress scantily or shabbily for the Christmas service or skipping the Christmas service to only celebrate and party.



We start with something that may shock you with a picture of Miss Universe wearing scantily or shabby clothes on stage. I have to admit; I am actually a little nervous taking such a picture as an example to our readers and ask the question. Is this appropriate for attending an interview or conference?

Almost immediately nearly all your heads will start shaking no which would include the young millennials agreeing swiftly. Maybe the "more seasoned" of you may suspect that there is more to the question. Well, there is.

I put the question to you a second time but with a small adjustment. Is it appropriate to dress scantily or shabbily or show lack of reverence when attending Christmas services? The reaction will be completely different this time around. Of course one would say one looks at keeping up with the "Jones" - fashion, style and whatever they see fit that will make them present themselves the way they want to. But, what does this actual attracting at-

tention thru - fashion, style or whatever has to do with the actual reverence of life in celebrating Christmas. The entertainment part of the celebrations were never connected to celebrating Jesus birth/birthday, who was sent by God His father as a messenger of joy, peace and mercy?

We have a problem for Christmas services it's not people attending the service dressed scantily or shabbily or lacking respect and reverence. The problem is that after decades reverence has been relegated to the back seat and most now don't get that Christmas should be celebrated keeping Christ the center of the celebration. Christmas service is not meant to only be a place where you live for appearances or attracting attention - show off your new clothes or whatever and hope that someday someone will say nice dress, nice fit..... Christmas service is a service to connect and build relationships with God thru the birth of His son through reverence which is love and gratitude.

You might be thinking "yes but those relationships need to be spiritual and reverent." Ok, but what spiritual relationship do you have that's completely devoid of anything personal?

The point to get across is that you just need to celebrate Christmas with keeping Christ the center of the celebration. And by celebrating Christmas that way, you'll likely be criticized. Just remember, the only way to avoid criticism is to say nothing, do nothing, and be nothing. At that point, why even bother about the criticism? By the way things are presently going chance are that this sort of thing will eventually happen.

## Why is there such a sudden change?

Is it a dissatisfaction which leads us to live in that tension of worldly vanity, to live for appearances? One sees many



people who live only to be in a shop window, for appearances, in order to say: 'Ah, what a good thing it is...', for fame, worldly fame. Doing this, however, you cannot serve the Lord. That is why we ask the Lord to remove obstacles because in serenity, be it in body or spirit, we can dedicate ourselves freely to his service.

Be warned against the temptation of remaining fascinated by the "fireworks of an entertaining religion", and always searching for "new things, revelations and messages, which last for a moment and then vanish away

Indeed, Jesus also tells us another thing: how it is, namely, the way. In fact, the Kingdom of God does not come about in the way of attracting attention and no one will say 'here it is' or 'there it is'. No, the Kingdom of God is in the midst of all of you: it is not a religion of entertainment with which we are always searching for new things, revelations and messages.

And this religion of entertainment is not hope: it is the desire to have something in one's hand. However, our salvation is measured in hope, the hope that belongs to the man who sowed wheat or the woman who prepared the bread, mixing yeast and flour: the hope that it will grow. On the other hand, this artificial light or attraction is all about an instant and then vanishes, as fireworks do: it is not enough to illuminate a house, it is a show.

This is where things get interesting. The question is why? Because - Most in the community pay less attention to keeping Christ the center of the Christmas celebration or for that matter all Christian celebrations, or have lost respect and reverence and are in great haste to get into the entertainment aspect which they had planned way ahead while the clergy have done nothing to redirect this situation, to the correct direction, to plan the spiritual celebration way ahead and ensure community participation in following Jesus example but all that the clergy have done is to look

the other side.

What exactly has happened then? The church and the clergy have become a victim of what the economist Friedrich Hayek has called the knowledge problem. As he wrote in a seminal article called the 'Use of knowledge in Society' 'Any problem of Society..... is a problem of utilization of knowledge which is not given to anyone in total-ity.'

This basically means that whenever the clergy make a decision like looking the other side ..... they think they have all the knowledge required that will correct the situation. But they never do. As Matt Ridley writes in *The Evolution of Everything*: 'The knowledge required to organize human society is bafflingly voluminous, it cannot be held in a single human head'

This is precisely where the Clergy have got caught. They don't realize that the community will drift towards preferring entertainment as the present situation demands, live for appearances and attention resulting in lack of respect and reverence towards church services and will figure out various ways to not be spiritually or even physically present during the service.

Christian love, being rooted in the Incarnation, is always 'tangible', and is often demonstrated through "works of mercy". However most are at the risk of believing in the kind of "love" that is found in a "novel or a soap opera: worldly, philosophical, abstract, and soft

On the contrary, the criterion for Christian love is the Incarnation of the Word. Whoever says that Christian love is something else is the antichrist, who does not acknowledge that the Word came in the flesh. Precisely this is our truth: God sent his Son, who became Incarnate and made a life like us. Because of this we must love as Jesus loved; love as Jesus taught us; love ... following Jesus' example; love ...walking along the path of Jesus. Thus, the

path of Jesus gives life.

This is the knowledge Hayek talked about. Less knowledgably or devout Catholics view Christianity as a religion of entertainment resulting in celebrating Christmas as an entertaining celebration and have forgotten about keeping Christ the center of the celebration. They will attend service only to fulfill their obligation and in a haste in order to go into the entertaining celebration. Now only if the clergy had read Hayek. They could have got the community to demonstrate the Kingdom of God does not come about in the way of attracting attention or for appearances but through works of mercy Christian love that the word came in the flesh – **God sent his son to be born of man and women on Christmas day to spread mercy, joy and brotherhood to all mankind.**

Gospel (19:1-10): the tax collector from Jericho feels that curiosity, a curiosity that comes from grace, which was sown by the Holy Spirit and brings Zacchaeus to say: "I want to see the Lord". The initiative comes from the Spirit. Hence the Lord looks up and says: 'Come down, invite me to your house!'

God, therefore, always acts with love: either to correct us, to invite us to dinner, or to be invited. He is going to tell us: 'Wake up'. He is going to tell us: 'Open'. He is going to tell us: 'Come down'. But it is always him. Hence the final invitation that every Christian asks himself: "Do I know in my heart how to distinguish when the Lord says 'wake up'? When he says 'open'? And when he says to me 'come down'?"

Let us pray to the Lord that our journey in love will never — never — make us an abstract love. And that the love may instead be tangible, with works of mercy, in order to touch the flesh of Christ there, of Christ incarnate and guide us to celebrate this Christmas the same way. Wish one and All a Merry Christmas!!!! AND A Happy New Year 2017

# Kallianpura's Holy Rosary monument

**K**allianpura, on the Karnataka coast along the Arabian Sea is steeped in ancient history since centuries; In 2012, the Mangalore Catholic diocese gave way to Udupi diocese and the Milagres church in the heart of Kallianpur or Kallianpura was designated as it's 'Cathedral' the importance of the area has peaked. Kallianpura, historically is seen as a prime place of Christian historicity, on the banks of the river that bears the same name. It has reinforced it self rapidly taking over as the focal point. Several historians have mentioned Kallianpura to have been sighted by early Christianity and later by Vasco Da Gama when he landed on a nearby St.Mary's Island, now a vital tourist spot, note that in some documents it is confused with 'Kalyan' near the present Mumbai.

Udupi is a temple town renowned for the Krishna Mutt (Temple of Lord Krishna) and also the cradle of the Vaishnavite saint Shri Madhuvacharya who founded the Krishna Mutt in the 13th century. Karkala, near by is a prominent Jain holy place. Here, the recently declared Minor Basilica of St.Lawrence is revered by a wide cross section of people. Udupi cuisine is also well known and considered unique not only in most parts of India, but also in many spots the world over. The Konkani's of all creeds have had a very cordial harmony with the main stream here historically over many centuries. The culture matrix borne into Barkur, Karkala, Kirem/Kinnigoli, Moodbidri, Shirva, Moolky, Belman, Ganguli, Udyavar,



by Ivan Saldanha-Shet

Brahmavar are all cradles of old Konkani culture and language, making an impact over seas too. At home is an ancient agricultural and traditional life style and culture bringing respect, dignity and value - now rapidly transforming. Take a look at Mount Rosary Church Santhakatte, Kallianpur, just off the coastal NH 66; One now finds this church in it's renovated glory which attracts a lot of attention. The beach off nearby Kemmanu is lovely and virgin.

## Historic church :

Mount Rosary Church (Portuguese: De Nossa Senhora do Rosario de Caliampoor), as per tradition, came into existence in 1837 at the time of the Goan schism when some Catholic families withdrew from their Parish, the Milagres Church near by and acknowledged the jurisdiction of the Vicar Ap-

ostolic of Verapoly. they built the Holy Rosary church, as such two churches in close proximity exist.

In 1880, at Nejar Hill, the foundation stone of the new church was blessed by the then Bishop of Mangalore Most Rev. Pagani on 26 November 1880. Due to lack of funds, the church could not be completed. In this situation, Mathias Rebello of Thonse pledged his property, took a loan and completed the church building. The first mass, in the newly constructed tiled roof church building was offered on 14 May 1882. On 9 January 1883, the statue of Holy Rosary was installed in the church. The church was donated land by the local 'Patel', Ignatius Fernandes. The church was expanded gradually. From 1925 schools were started, In 1958 Lourdes Hospital built by Msgr R Denis Sequeira was inaugurated, Mount Rosary English Medium School came up in 1997 expansion is still in progress.





The Jubilee (1837-1987) celebrations were held in 1987.

Mount Rosary Church completed 175 years of existence in 2012. To mark the event it was collectively decided to re-build the church. Sunday, January 29th 2012, saw the last mass celebration in the previous church edifice which was demolished. On March 3, 2012, The foundation stone was blessed by the Bishop of Mangalore Diocese, Most Rev. Dr. Aloysius Paul D'Souza. The construction work of the church went on for 2 years and 9 months.

#### The present edifice :

The new building of the 178-year-old Mount Rosary Church was inaugurated on January 6, 2015. Thousands of devotees witnessed the grand inauguration and blessing of the newly built Church. With an imposing structure and elegant exterior, the church is spacious enough to comfortably accommodate 1200 faithful. The church is 115 feet long, 76 feet wide and 60 feet high. The chief attraction of the church is the high altar which has been superbly executed by renowned artists and architects from Korathi, Kerala. They have carved a beautiful altar with great care and dedication. The church has an adoration chapel which is fully air-conditioned. The wooden cross on the high altar, the tinted glass windows depicting different episodes from the Bible, the mosaic style Way of the



Cross, the beautiful statues of saints and above all, the statue of Our Lady of Mount Rosary are the chief attractions of the church.

#### Architectural Wonder :

The unique classical indianised altar of the church was designed by the artistes and architects from Korathi in Kerala. The church has an Adoration Chapel which is air-conditioned. Specialties of the newly-built edifice, such as the entrance door which measures 58 feet in height due to which the beauty and interiors of the church can be viewed. The main altar of the church is beauti-

fully carved and designed and very Indian. The entire church measuring 115 feet, in width, 76 feet, breadth, 60' feet in height has colorful stained windows with scenes from the Bible. The center of attraction is the giant fan which is 12 ft, with five blades that provide breeze to a 60 m surrounding. The air from the fan at a speed of 56RPM is good enough to equate 40 ordinary fans of normal size. This fan costs around Rs 9 lakh and has been donated. People are regularly seen flocking to admire this unique monument and in a short time has become a curious attraction and wonder.

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# The Gavle Goat

## (Gavlebocken)

by Peter Castellino

**T**he Gavle goat (Gavlebocken) is a traditional Christmas display and Julbocken is the Swedish version of the traditional Yule goat in Sweden erected annually at Slottstgert Castle Square in central Gavle and the other Julbocken is in the Swedish island of Gotland and both area giant version of a traditional Swedish Yule Goat figure of straw erected every year at the beginning of Advent over a period of two days by local community groups.

Swedish Christmas legends say that the Julbocken brings presents for children on Christmas Eve and so does the Jultomten-the Swedish Santa Clause.

Inspired by this Christmas character, a giant version of Julbocken, made from straw and built in Gavle called the Gavle Goat, Swedes hang tiny Julbocken made of straw and bound with red ribbons on their Christmas trees and even hang them on the walls for good luck as a part of traditional Swedish Christmas customs.

Garden gnomes are also a Christmas custom.



The Gavle Goat is notable for being a recurrent target of vandalism by arson being destroyed several times since the first goat was erected in 1966.

On 2nd December 1966, Swedish advertising consultant made a giant version of the traditional Yule Goat in the square to attract tourists to visit restaurants and shops in the southern part of the city centre.

The first goat's design was assigned to then chief of the Gavle fire department, Gavlen's brother and the construction was by the fire department who erected a goat every year from 1966 to 1970 and from 1986 to 2002 and Harry Strom financed the first goat a 13 metre- 43 feet tall, 7 metre 23 feet long, 3 tonne goat in the square and on New Year's Eve it was burnt down which people take great pride in watching it burnt down like those who take great pride in the giant Swedish goat.

Later on businessmen called Southern Merchants-Soders Kopman financed the goat building which was subject to arson attacks and in 1971 the Southern Merchants stopped building the goats.

The Natural Science Club of the School of Vasa began building the structure

which was 2 metres-6.6 ft and on receiving a positive reaction for their Yule Goat they built another one the following year and continued this practice.- which was burnt and vandalised and one year run over by a car.

The construction varies every year according to the calendar year i.e. on the first day of Advent according to Western Christian tradition in late November or early December and since the fire station is near the goat the fire can be extinguished before the wooden skeleton is severely damaged and if it is burnt down before Lucia-feast day of 13 December the goat is rebuilt and the skeleton is then treated and repaired

## Thanksgiving



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—Ms A. F. M.,  
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Prop. B. D'Souza



and the goat reconstructed over it using straw which the Goat Committee has pre-ordered.

From 1988 onward English bookmakers betted on the goat's survival and in 1966 the Southern Merchants introduced camera surveillance for the goat for 24 hours daily and on 27 November 2004 the Gavle Goat's homepage was hacked and one of the two official webcams changed to display Brinn Bock-javel-translation Burn.

One year security guards were posted around the goat to prevent further vandalism, the temperatures dropped far below zero and when they went into a restaurant to escape the cold the vandals struck.

On the 3-4 December 2005 weekend a series of attacks on public Yule Goats across Sweden occurred-the Gavle Goat was burnt on 3 December, the Visby goat on Gotland was burnt down, the Yule Goat in Soderkoping, Ostergotland was torched and the goat in Lycksele, Vasterbotten was attacked.

In 1966 the goat cost was SEK 10,000 and its construction in 2005 was 100,000 Swedish kronor-the city pays one-third the cost while the Southern Merchants pay the remaining sum and since 2003 the goat is constructed by a group of unemployed people known as ALU workers.

Four people have been caught or convicted for vandalizing the goat.

The Christmas season of 2006 marked the 40th anniversary of the Gavle Goat and on Sunday 3 December, the city held a large celebration in honour of the goat.

The Goat Committee fireproofed the goat with Fiber Pro Tector Fireproof a fireproofing substance used in airplanes-earlier when the goat was fireproofed the dew made the liquid drip off the goat and to prevent this happening in 2006 Fireproof Pro Tector Solvent Base was applied to the goat.

Despite their efforts the goat has been destroyed 27 times-the most recent incident was on 21 December 2013 when the goat was torched by vandals once again.

Since 1986 two Yule Goats have been built in Gavle: the Gavle Goat by the Southern Merchants and the Yule Goat by the Natural Science Club of the School of Vasa.

Till 1985 the Southern Merchants held the world record for the largest Yule Goat but the Natural Science Club's goat increased in size and in 1985 their Yule Goat entered the Guinness Book of Records with an official height of 12.5 metres-41 ft.

The creator of the original 1966 goat, Stig Gavlen thought the Natural Science Club's goat unfairly won the title of the largest Yule Goat since it was

not as attractive as the Southern Merchant's goat and the neck was excessively long.

The next year there was a Goat war-the Southern Merchants understood the publicity value and erected a huge goat and the Natural Science Club erected a smaller one in protest and the Southern Merchants wanted their huge goat to claim a world record but the measurement showed of the goat showed that it fell short.

In the next seven years there were no further attempts for a world record but there was some bad feeling between the Natural Science Club and the Southern Merchants when the Natural Science Club put up a sign near the goat wishing a Merry Christmas to everyone except the Southern Merchants.

In 1993 the Southern Merchants again announced that they were going to attempt a world record and the goat stood 10.5 metres-34 ft when completed and The Natural Science Club's Yule Goat that year measured 14.9 metres-49 ft earning them another place in the Guinness Book of Records.

Thus we see the importance of the Gavle goat-Gavlebocken as an Advent and Christmas custom.

**A Very Happy Christmas  
to one and all.**

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# Do you have the Christmas Spirit?



**W**ould you know the Christmas Spirit if you saw it? It is fast becoming an endangered species in our culture today. We slash at it unintentionally with questions like, "What do you want for Christmas?"

Yet the true spirit of Christmas is a spirit of giving... it is evidenced best in a generous heart. It shines out with stark clarity in the lives of those who possess it.

Having a generous heart has very little to do with the amount of money we spend on gifts or goodies or on how much we give to church and charities.

One mark of a Christian is a generous spirit, and God encourages us to set the bar high in our own lives. After all He will provide what we need as we go. He began it all when He gave His son that first Christmas. Jesus bought us forgiveness and gives us new life. God's Spirit of generosity is all over our lives as believers. He looks to us to live generously and to enjoy excelling in it. We get to give grace away on His behalf!

Think about ways today where you can show generosity of spirit that has nothing to do with your pocket book.

Give compassion today to someone who is hurting... even if you can see

they have dug their own hole.

Give the gift of time to someone who needs to process her thoughts out loud. Look her in the eye and really hear what is being said.

Give forgiveness remembering God has forgiven you.

Give encouragement to someone who is frustrated or discouraged.

Give a place at your table and share a meal.

The list could go on. Yet all these things require a willing heart... a heart filled with grace because we have received such grace from our Father who sent His Son that first Christmas. Today, why not look for the places you can excel in the grace of giving?

Try writing a note on the top of your December "to do list". It's a declaration that can change the way you go through your busy days of December. It will take you through all the days of the new year too with a perspective that will surprise and refresh you. Declare over all your activities, "With God's help I will do this with a generous heart."

**the true Christmas Spirit.**

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# What Exactly Was the Christmas Star?

**D**uring the Christmas season, it's hard to go anywhere without seeing stars hanging from street lamps and perched atop Christmas trees. Although the Star of Bethlehem appears just once in the Bible, in the Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament, it has become one of the holiday's most important and enduring symbols. Yet astronomers are still puzzled by whatever might have inspired that aspect of the Christmas story.

It's clear to modern astronomers that the Star of Bethlehem behaved very oddly, if it existed at all. First of all, Jesus Christ almost certainly wasn't born in December, so looking for its origins in the night sky this time of year isn't the best place to start. Historians have long agreed that Christmas shares roots with the ancient Roman solstice holiday, Saturnalia, and that Jesus was most likely born in the spring when shepherds would be tending their flocks, Donna Vickroy writes for the Chicago Tribune. In fact, Christmas only takes place on December 25 because of the Roman Emperor Constantine, who moved the holiday in order to coincide with the shortest night of the year.

While the Bible says that the three Magi were led to Jesus' birthplace by a star in the sky, Art Maurer, the director of Joliet Junior College's Trackman Planetarium, tells Vickroy that that explanation doesn't quite jibe with the rest of the story. "The Magi came from Persia, which meant they traveled 900 miles west. So they didn't see a star in the east," Maurer tells Vickroy.

Some have suggested that the magi might have actually followed a bright meteor, comet or even a supernova, but as Joe Rao writes, there are several problems with these theories as well. First, meteors may be strikingly bright, but they burn up in a flash when entering the Earth's atmosphere, meaning the magi would have needed something a bit longer-lasting to chart their travels. A comet is a strong possibility, as Halley's Comet was visible in 11 BC - a few years before when some historians think Jesus may have been born - but ancient astronomers often considered them bad omens, not good ones. And while a supernova would have certainly been a dramatic sight, there is no historical record of a bright nova at that time, Rao reports.

There's one other possibility: it could have been a visible planet, like Jupiter. According to Maurer, Jupiter was in retrograde at the time, which means it would have appeared to travel east as it rose in the sky each night. Not only that, but ancient astronomers considered it the king planet, and its appearance in the Leo constellation might have been pretty significant for people who saw meaning in the movements of the stars and planets, Vickroy writes.

Historians will never know exactly what inspired the story of the Christmas Star, but like most symbols, the final meaning comes down to you.



# The Christmas Crib

**T**he Christmas Crib (crèche) dates back to St. Francis of Assisi (Feast October 4). It was in 1293 that the first crèche was celebrated in the woods of Greccio near Assisi, on Christmas Eve. There lived in that town a man by the name of John (Messier Giovanni Velitta), a very holy man who stood in high esteem. Blessed Francis loved with him a special affection because he despised the nobility of the flesh and strove after the nobility of the soul.

Blessed Francis called upon John about two weeks before Christmas and said to him, "If you desire that we should celebrate this year's Christmas together at Greccio, go quickly and prepare what I tell you; for I want to enact the memory of the Infant who was born at Bethlehem and how He was bedded in the manger on hay between a donkey and an ox. I want to see all of this with my own eyes." The good and faithful man departed quickly and prepared everything that the Saint had told him. The Friars who had come from many communities, gathered around St. Francis as did the men and women of the neighborhood. They bought candles and torches to brighten the night. St. Francis arrived and saw that everything had been prepared. The crib was ready, hay was brought, the ox and the donkey were led to the spot. Greccio became a new Bethlehem. The crowds gathered and rejoiced in the celebration. Solemn Mass was sung.

St. Francis, dressed in deacon's vestments, (it is said that out of humility he never attempted to become a priest) sang the Gospel. Then he preached a delightful sermon to the people. It is recorded that after the Mass, St. Francis went to the crib and stretched out his arms as though the Holy Child



was there, and brought into being by the intensity of his devotion, the Babe appeared and the empty manger was filled with the radiance of the new born King.

St. Francis' idea of bringing Bethlehem into one's own town spread quickly all over the Christian world, and soon there were Christmas cribs in churches and homes. The Moravian Germans brought this custom to the United States. They called it Putz. The oldest known picture is a "Nativity scene" dating from about 380 that was a wall decoration in a Christian family's burial chamber, discovered in the Roman catacombs of St. Sebastian in 1877.

There is a legend that at midnight on Christmas Eve animals have the gift of speech. This gift was bestowed because the humble farm animals gave the infant Jesus His first shelter, and warmed him with their breath, thus they were rewarded with the gift of human speech.

However, in most countries it is considered bad luck to hear them conversing, so no one has ever reported doing so.

Cattle bow to the East, and bees hum the 100th Psalm in their hives. Some legends insist that this occurs on Old Christmas Eve, January 5. St. Francis, who loved animals because they, too, were God's creatures extended special kindness to animals at Christmas. He urged farmers to provide their oxen and donkeys with extra rations of corn and hay "for the reverence of the Son of God, whom on such a night the Blessed Virgin did lay down in the stall between the ox and the donkey." A Christmastide, St. Francis scattered crumbs of bread under the trees, so the tiny creatures could feast and be happy.

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# The Church of the Nativity

**T**he Church of the Nativity was built in the 4th century by the mother of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine. Helena also was the person responsible for the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. The present building, the oldest church in Israel/Palestine was reconstructed in the 6th century by the Emperor Justinian (527-565) and further repaired by the Crusaders.

The church has a colorful history. When the Persians invaded in 614, they left the church intact, legend has it, because they were moved by a painting inside of the Nativity story depicting the Wise Men of the East in Persian clothes. King Edward IV of England donated wood from English oak trees for the ceiling. He also contributed lead to cover the roof, but that was taken by the Turks, who melted it down to use as ammunition in their war against the Venetians.

The entrance to the church is a low doorway that has its own legends. One story is that the door was installed by the Muslims during their rule to remind Christians that they were guests in the country and must bow to their hosts. An alternative explanation is that the height of the door was designed to prevent unbelievers from entering the



church on horseback. Yet another version holds that it was to protect the Christians from their hostile neighbors.

The church is divided into five naves by four rows of Corinthian pillars with pictures of the apostles on them. The names are written in Greek and Latin and many visitors have carved their own signatures over the centuries. The floor of the nave has a hole that allows you to see what remains of the Byzantine mosaics that covered the original church floor.

The Altar of the Nativity sits below a silver and gold chandelier. Stairways on either side of the main altar lead to a grotto. A fourteen-point silver star embedded in white marble indicates the birthplace of Christ. An inscription reads, Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est ("Here Jesus Christ was born to the Virgin Mary"). Fifteen lamps burn around the spot. Nearby is the Chapel of the Manger, where Mary placed the baby Jesus. Like the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, various Christian denominations share control

over different parts of the church. The grotto is under the jurisdiction of the Greek Orthodox Church.

The traditional midnight mass celebrated on Christmas Eve is held in St. Catherine's, the Roman Catholic church next door to the Church of the Nativity. This is also the site of several chapels with their own historic and religious significance. The Chapel of St. Jerome is where the Bishop of Bethlehem translated the Old Testament into Latin. The Chapel of the Innocents is devoted to the deaths of the babies killed by Herod. The Chapel of St. Joseph is where an angel appeared to Joseph and commanded him to flee to Egypt.

Not far from Manger Square is the Milk Grotto. According to Christian tradition, this is where Mary spilled some milk while nursing Jesus when she was hiding from Herod's soldiers. The milk turned the rocks of the cave a chalk white color. The rock is believed by some to have healing power and to make nursing easier for women.



# New Year:

## A time for new beginnings

**N**ew Year's Day is the oldest of all holidays. About 4000 years ago, the Babylonians celebration lasted for eleven days. New Year's day according to the Gregorian calendar (January 1) is one of the most popular occasions in India. Many people throughout the world celebrate this festive occasion with their loved ones or in large gatherings. Exchanging messages, greeting cards and gifts are a part and parcel of the New Year celebration. The media too covers many New Year events which are showcased on prime channels for most of the day. People who decide to stay indoors resort to these New Year shows for entertainment and fun. The age-old tradition of planning new resolutions for the coming year is a common sight among children and adults.

India is a land of various communities and each community celebrates its New Year in a different way. In Maharashtra, it is celebrated on the first

day of Chaitra. The day is called 'Gudi Padva' by the Maharashtrian community. On this day, people get up early in the morning and wear traditional clothes. Outside the house or on the verandahs or balconies, the Gudi is put up. The Gudi is a long pole which is covered on the top with a silk cloth. A small garland of mango leaves is placed on it and a silver, copper or brass pot is inverted over it. Tamilians celebrate their New Year on April 13. It is called 'Vashaparapu' by the Tamilians, meaning beginning of the year. Some Tamilians follow the tradition of keeping a mirror and a plate of sweets, fruits and money before the image of their God whom they worship. Gujaratis celebrate their New Year by visiting friends and relatives and taking their blessings on the day following Diwali. Muslims celebrate their New Year before the start of the Islamic year. The Parsis celebrate their New Year which is known as Pateti in August with prayers, greetings and giving away of alms to the poor. The Bengalis celebrate their New Year on the first day of Vaisakh,

the month following Chaitra, which is considered the first month of the year by many Hindus. Christians celebrate their New Year on January 1 with a lot of merriment. New Year celebrations are also popular in other parts of the world and each community keeps celebrating it in one way or the other.

In some places, a figure resembling an old man is made. The figure signifies all that should be dispensed with, such as evil thoughts, bad behaviour, and so on. The figure stands on a road or in lanes and passersby often drop money into the box that is kept beside it. The effigy is set on fire at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve. The burning of the effigy signifies the end of the old year and the beginning of a new one. The money collected is used for partying by the people who have made the effigy. Most of us have forgotten that the New Year is not only a time for revelry but also for reflection.

New Year is a time to celebrate the start of something new. It is a time to make new promises, some to be broken, some to be kept. It is also a time to look ahead and try to change things for the better. It is also a time to look behind and see what we may have done wrong, and how to change it. It is also a time to start new friendships and a time to ask for forgiveness from your enemies. New Year is a joyous time because we feel like we get to start all over again. On New Year's Day, people are happy, laughing, giggling and sharing about events of the past year and those before. A Happy New Year to one and all.



BY JUBEL D'CRUZ

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# His Coming Brings Us Closer To God

**T**he fourth Sunday of Advent has arrived and the glitter of shimmering lights, artificial stars, hollies and colorful wreaths for the front door of homes, not forgetting the Christmas trees and Santa toys, are a few of the decorations in markets and malls.

Importantly, and most welcome are the many types of beautiful cribs available spreading the message that Jesus, the Messiah will be born.

The raised voices of choirs can be heard from many of the churches preparing for the coming big event. Homes are being cleaned and painted with gorgeous curtains, sofa-covers and bed linen. Around every street corner young people are getting straw, bamboo sticks and glue to put together enchanting cribs, one group always tries to outdo the others, and it's all great fun.

Folks are rushing around to make new clothes and some to get the readymade dress, as long as its branded. Making the home-made Christmas cake is a big attraction with the older generation, and also the grape and ginger- wine drinks.

It's the mystic season for joy and all round happiness: A time to celebrate the arrival of our Holy Savior, Messiah to the world, the king of kings. We celebrate the Lord's incarnation; God has entered the human body to redeem mankind of sin. The babe in the manger comes to show us the way to His Kingdom and to everlasting life.

Hallelujah. Hallowed be His name. Hosanna in the highest. There is only One God. Christians and Catholics believe this precious truth, more valuable than the most expensive diamond in the world. This is the truth. The Ambassadors for Jesus have announced 2017 to be the Year of Christian-Catholic Unity, and they will celebrate it with the slogan: In One God, we are One. This message

will be carried to the four corners of the earth.

The days of Advent conditions us along the spiritual path of love and mercy, in order to embrace the glory of the Lord's birth.

"How good it is to sing praises to our God; for he is gracious...(Ps.147:1).

St. Luke, the apostle has written, " And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God." (Lk.2:13).

The Son of God will soon be among us. His presence will be in all places: in homes, offices, factories, and places of worship. Apparently this is the miracle many men would like to talk about. Eventually, the world will sing praises in thanksgiving to our heavenly Father. And all people will bask in the sunshine of his name.

"Praising God and having the goodwill of all the people". (Acts.2:47).

On the highest level God wants us to show love to each other and one another. When you show love you will receive love. I have known of men and women who have dedicated their lives to love, sharing and caring for others. "Love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return." (Lk.6:35).

The message of peace is in the air. The world, sadly enough is not at peace; problems abound for rich and poor. Sorrow, sin and suffering constructs a twilight bridge of sadness, fear and despair in the hearts of all humankind. In the midst of all this we must pray for peace, believe in peace and know that Christ Jesus will not fail to reward us in the hereafter.

The prophet Isaiah had made several pronouncements of the Lord as told to him. He spoke of the special bond of peace God sealed with His faithful. The peace of Jesus has been left behind for us, "My peace I give to you." Jesus said.

"Your faith has saved you; go in peace". (Lk.7:50).

"My covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you." (Is.54:10).



BY MELVYN BROWN

Across the weeks of advent a brilliant and emotionally tender story revolves around the Virgin Mother of God.

Mary, the young woman who said 'Yes' to the Will of the Lord, and obeyed his every word; Mary, the brave heart who sacrificed her youth and trusted in the true spirit of faith, said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant...." (Lk.1:46-48).

The Virgin Mary bore the excruciating pain of giving birth, wrapping the Divine child in swaddling clothes, received the 3 Kings from the East, and the shepherds from the field. On hearing the warning from the angel, Mary rose in obedience, took the Christ child and along with Joseph went to Egypt. (Mat.2:13).

Mary is the temple of Christmas enshrined. She is the Mother of mothers, lamp of God, foundation of the Church, our intercessor, wall against evil, arms of comfort, shield of strength, guardian of the lonely, weak and the afraid, commiserate for the old, joy at the moment of death. Hail Holy Queen of Heaven.

Mary, you have brought the Lord closer to humankind. Blessed is your name.

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# 6 Little Stories

( 1 )

ONCE, All villagers decided to pray for rain, on the day of prayer all the People gathered but only one boy came with an umbrella.

**That's - FAITH**

( 2 )

WHEN You throw a baby in the air, she laughs because she knows you will catch her.

**That's - TRUST**

( 3 )

EVERY Night we go to bed, without any assurance of being alive the next Morning but still we set the alarms to wake up.

**That's - HOPE**

( 4 )

WE Plan big things for tomorrow in spite of zero knowledge of the future.

**That's - CONFIDENCE**

( 5 )

WE See the world suffering. But still we get Married.

**That's - LOVE**

( 6 )

On an Old Man's shirt was written a cute sentence  
 'I Am Not 60 Years Old.., I Am Sweet 16 with 44 years Experience.'

**That's - ATTITUDE**

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# When Was Messiah Born?

by Capt. Mervin John Lobo

In the Gospel of Luke 2:8." The Rabbis in the Jewish Talmud state that the shepherds were in the field watching their sheep on the night when Jesus Christ was born. The people who argue that Jesus was born on December 25th and some people will argue that Jesus was born during the feast of Tabernacle in autumn are also wrong because the male Jews have to be present in Jerusalem and Joseph would not break the law.

It is just one time of the year that the shepherds watch their flock at night and that is spring time because it is the lamb season where the sheep litter only in spring and not at any other time of the year. According to the Hebrew calendar it is the month of Nisan (March/April). Jesus the innocent lamb of God was born in Bethlehem; these sacrificial lambs are born only for the Sacrifice in the Temple in Jerusalem. In Exodus 12:3-6" "On the tenth day of this month each man must take a lamb from the flock, one for each family; one lamb for each household. If the household is too small to eat the lamb a man must join with his neighbor," The Tenth of Nisan is Palm Sunday and God is taking His lamb to the temple to be sacrificed.

God is perfect in all His ways; Everything God does happens on the precise Jewish holiday, date and time included. The birth of Jesus begins at spring time in the month of "Nisan which means the beginning". The first day of Nisan is the very beginning of the Hebrew year The Hebrew calendar is based on the moon and this where we get the word month.

The Blessed Virgin Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and she delivered the child Jesus also by the power of the Holy Spirit; she did not come under the curse (Gen.3; 16)



The 3 wise men came from Persia following the Star of Bethlehem. Isaiah prophesied 700 years ago this prophecy was fulfilled: (Isaiah 60:3) "Above you Yahweh now rises and above you his glory appears. The nations come to your light and the kings to your dawning brightness".

Mathew 2:2 reads "We saw his star as it rose as it rose and we have come to do Him homage." No natural star moves, The Magi first saw this Star in 6 B.C. in Persia. They were not present at Jesus' birth in 6 B.C so they met King Herod in 4 B.C. in Bethlehem after the birth of Jesus.

This is the first **ERROR BECAUSE HEROD DIED IN 4 B.C..** Herod asked the 3 Magi the exact date on which the Star appeared" (Math 2:7) "and passed an order that all male children who were 2 year old or under reckoning by the date he had been careful to ask the wise men." (Math.2:16) When Jesus died he was 39 years old and not 33 years which is incorrect.

How the Star did led them to the King (Jesus) in Bethlehem? Around 6 B.C at the birth of Jesus there was a convergence of planets Jupiter, Venus, Saturn and Mars and this convergence happens once in 6000 years and the famous ancient astronomer (Ptolemy) confirms and states that the language of the star is Jupiter and that "The land of Judea or Israel and its surrounding region was linked to the constellation of Aries the Ram and this mystical event happened in March the month

of Nisan in Spring time on March 20th 6 B.C. when Jesus Christ the King of the Jews and the Heavenly Saviour was born.

Dead Sea Scroll confirms. the priestly calendar begins at Equinox on Wednesday the 4th day of Nisan 1. The Priestly calendar also leads to the birth of Messiah to March 20th 6 B.C. to Nisan 1. The dead Sea Scroll and the Talmud match exactly on the Messiah birth.

Hidden in the Vaults of the Vatican There have been 40 anti Popes till date; the first being Novatian and later another ANTI POPE HIPPOLYTUS WHO CHANGED THE ORIGINAL DATE FROM MARCH 20TH 6 B.C, TO DECEMBER 25TH 0.A.D.. THIS CORRECTION IS FOUND IN THE ARCHIVE OF THE VATICAN VAULT.

December 25th came to be accepted as the birthday of Jesus as it was on this day (25th December according to the Julian calendar, 6th January according to Egyptian), the time of the winter solstice, i.e; a time when the dying sun began its steady climb into the northern skies, that the pagans celebrated the dies natalis Solis Invicii, i.e; that is of the sun god which had been proclaimed principal patron of the Roman Empire, with a temple dedicated to him on 25th December 274 A.D. by Emperor Aurelian, and the date was also regarded as the birth date of the Iranian mystery god, Mithra the Sun of Righteousness.

The clues of Jesus birth is the Tabernacle. In the Gospel of John 1:14 "the WORD became flesh and dwelt among us". The Tabernacle is the symbol that God dwells among us. The first Tabernacle took 9 months for completion when the Israelites wandered in the Sinai desert from conception to completion. Further more the final clue is found in Exodus 40:1-2.

*Capt. Mervin Lobo (Master Mariner) who has studied Scriptures in Jerusalem and contributes articles on various topics to different magazines around the globe.*

# Who should make a will and why?

Your will tells everyone what should happen to your money, possessions and property after you die. If you don't leave a will, the law decides how your estate is passed on - and this may not be in line with your wishes. Let us discuss further to understand as in who needs to make a legal will

**A** will is a statement documented in a stamp paper or even on a piece of paper which includes the distribution of the assets amongst the family member in case of death of an individual. The person who wish to write a will can distribute his assets

## Prayer to **St. Expedite** for solving a financial crisis



I call forth the Power and the presence of **St. Expedite** in my time of financial trouble. I offer my body, heart, mind and soul upon your altar of light. I have faith and trust and complete confidence that you will be my strength in this time of need. Quickly come to my assistance.

(State Your Petition) \_\_\_\_\_

My financial need is urgent. Be my Light and Guide in this situation so that I may live with peace, love, prosperity and abundance and in the Praise of God.

Amen. (Promise Publication)

—*Flavia, Bandra West*



as per his wish to any family member. Writing a will isn't the most pleasant of tasks. After all, by doing so you're not only acknowledging your own inevitable demise but actively planning for it. However, more often, a lot of us are confused about who needs to have a will.

A will can be made by anyone above 21 years of age in India. You can make the will on plain paper in India. It's not legally necessary to make the will on stamp paper. It is advisable to write your will in your own hand writing, as the same can be verified later in case of any doubts raised by relatives.

So let us see the applicable individuals for a will depending on age and responsibilities.

**If you have a family with young children:** This is the age where your earnings start to increase substantially and one plans to acquire the wealth. There may be a case where the person has siblings of the same age. In such case making a will should define whether the estate after should be shared by the siblings or need to be with their immediate family only.

**If you have a matured family:** This stage of life (40 years or more) where you have school going kids and has acquired multiple real estate and other fixed assets like gold, vehicles along with investments in stocks and Mutual Funds is a crucial for Will. As the asset holding increases and be-

come more complex one needs to make a will.

**If you are nearing retirement:** Once you hit the 55 years mark, your kids are adult and self-sufficient. But you still want to support them in some way or the other. On the other hand you are about to receive a lump sum amount for retirement, planning to liquidate some real estate or gold to support your retirement. As there would be high cash flows and involvement of big cash transaction it is very important to define how this would be allocated later.

**If you are retired already:** Once an individual retires and relies mostly on his income or sometimes on the kids to financial support, the only source of wealth left is the property where they reside. One needs to create a will to determine on which way the wealth generated post their demise needs to be distributed amongst the remaining family. One might want to transfer it to their surviving spouse, or to one of the kids or equally divide amongst them.

**A will makes it much easier for your family or friends to sort everything out when you die - without a will the process can be more time consuming and stressful. Writing a will is also especially important if you have children or other family who depend on you financially or if you want to leave something to people outside your immediate family.**



# Financially wise women



**Mighty mommy is always on the look out for ways to save money. Here are some tips that put more cash back into your family's bank account**

**M**anaging a family is not an easy task. It involves taking care of every aspect of the house and the needs of every member and yet maintaining low bills.

#### **Turn it off:**

One ground rule for every family member is to turn the switches off once they leave the room. This should be quite strict with regards to everyone at home. This is helpful for your children in the long run and will show a great difference in the electricity bill at the end of every month.

#### **Order water when dining out and forget the dessert:**

You can imagine what a meal out costs for a big family of ten. Eating out at a decent restaurant a couple times a month is something everyone does. You can cut down on fancy food items and specially which come in less quantity. This makes it affordable and it's still a great night out.

#### **Purchasing clothing and shoes for family:**

There is no question that clothing can eat up a large chunk of a family's bud-

get, especially when you consider the cost of a single pair of kid's sneakers these days. Also take advantage of end of sale season and the like.

#### **Re-evaluate your cable bill:**

Cable connections have now become customized with a variety of channels with choice. They offer the option to choose only certain plans relating to channels you watch. So you no longer need to pay the complete amount. You will save tremendously with minimum channel options.

#### **Choose lunch over dinner when dining out:**

If you would like to experience nice restaurants at a better savings, in addition to only ordering water for drinks, choose lunch time to treat your family instead of dinner. Most nice restaurants have a full menu mid-day so you can fill up on a delicious meal and either have leftovers or something simple like sandwich for dinner.

#### **Take a money challenge:**

Challenge every single expense you have and get your family on board and involved in the process. The object of this exercise is to analyse every single line item such as different insurances, car payments, credit card payments, house taxes, cable and Internet and more. Next, look for the extras that can

be cut out. Then, compare insurance premiums, credit card rates, how much is paid for clothing and so on.

#### **Have a regular meal plan:**

Eating out is a true money drainer and it will cost you a deep pocket crunch before you know it. A regular meal plan will include the vegetables to be cooked that day and also be convenient to buy exactly the decided grocery item.

#### **Don't upgrade electronics and tech gadgets:**

Technology changes so quickly that it would certainly be possible to upgrade laptops, smart phones tablets and other electronic gadgets on a very regular basis. If your current tech items are working just fine, save your money by hanging on and using them as long as possible.

#### **Some more family finance suggestions**

- **Create a common money jar to which every member of the family adds their contribution once a month. The amount can be decided as per the house needs.**
- **Think of stipulated clothes and shopping season in a year suitable to buy clothes. The urge to shop every month for luxury items can be controlled.**

# Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve, which is the day before Christmas Day, is celebrated in many countries worldwide. It is a Christian observance that falls on December 24 in the Gregorian calendar.

## What Do People Do?

**M**any people around the world celebrate Christmas Eve in different ways. It is observed in many countries such as Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. Workers in some countries get a day off or half-day off to prepare for Christmas Day, including last-minute shopping for presents, decorations or food. In some countries Christmas Eve is celebrated with large family meals featuring traditional Christmas dishes. In some cultures, presents are exchanged and opened on the night of Christmas Eve. Many homes have their Christmas trees lit up, mistletoes hung, and other Christmas decorations, such as holly and ivy, at this time of the year.

Some people organize groups of singers who go Christmas caroling from door to door, or sing Christmas carols in public venues. It is also a time for children in many countries around the world to hang their Christmas stockings (or pillow cases), hoping for a present to arrive from Santa Claus on Christmas Day, which is December 25 in the Gregorian calendar. Children in France set out their shoes near a fireplace on Christmas Eve because they believe that Father Christmas (Santa Claus), also known as le Père Noël (in French), will arrive before dawn and fill them with toys, nuts and sweets.

Many churches hold special services during Christmas Eve, including midnight services. These services include special choirs and sermons to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Many

churches also display a crèche or miniature Nativity scene. Christmas celebrations in different countries combine the country's cultural traditions, beliefs and superstitions with more contemporary customs, such as Santa Claus and Christmas trees.

## Public Life

Christmas Eve is a public holiday in countries such as the Czech Republic and Estonia. Some banks and businesses are closed in some countries, including Austria and Germany, on Christmas Eve. Many people in countries such as Brazil have the afternoon off work on Christmas Eve.

Some stores are often open late to accommodate for last-minute Christmas shopping in some cities around the world. Schools and educational institutions are usually closed on Christmas Eve as it falls as part of either the winter (northern hemisphere) or summer (southern hemisphere) vacation period. Airports, bus stations and train stations may be busy as many people travel to visit their families around this time of the year.

## Background

Christmas Eve, also known as the Vigil of Christmas, is perceived as the culmination of the Advent season. Christmas Eve is the day before Christmas Day and is associated with celebrating Jesus Christ's birth, although his actual birth date has been disputed among many scholars. However, many Christmas traditions that are around today



have their roots in pre-Christian winter festivals. These include the importance of candles and decorations made from evergreen bushes and trees, symbolizing everlasting light and life.

In Roman times, a mid-winter festival was held. This was a relaxing time with a lot of parties and merry making. It was also common to give other people small gifts, such as dolls for children and candles for adults. This festival culminated with the celebration of the winter solstice, which fell on December 25 in the Roman calendar.

## Symbols

Since pagan times, it was customary to decorate with greenery on festivals, especially with holly, ivy, and mistletoe. After some debate, the church authorities permitted it to be done on Christian festivals, at least from the early seventh century in England. Holly and ivy were associated with good and evil, or male and female, and so were often combined. Mistletoe has pagan associations. For example, the druids of Gaul regarded mistletoe growing on oak trees as sent from heaven.

Images of Santa Claus, also known as Father Christmas, snowmen, reindeer, and candy canes are seen in cards, posters, signs and other printed or marketing material associated with the Christmas celebrations. Images of baby Jesus, the Christmas star, and other symbols associated with the religious meaning of Christmas are also seen during Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.



# The feast of the Epiphany

by Jubel D'Cruz

**T**he feast of the Epiphany celebrated on January 6 is meant to speak to our minds and hearts in a variety of ways. It speaks of the power of the stars in the sky to capture our attention. It speaks of how God worked through the guidance of one particular star to reveal Jesus as both Messiah and Saviour to the world. It speaks of how the Magi who by means of a miracle or the assistance of God's grace were able to recognize, against the backdrop of the myriad of the other stars in the sky, the appearance of a new star. And as our Gospel reading tells us, the Magi seem to have understood the appearance of this new star as a sign that a new and great king had been born. They set out on a long and arduous journey bearing gifts to go and pay this new born king homage. When the Magi set out on their journey, led by the light of a star, they probably never expected that the new born king they were coming to pay homage to was the true Light of the world.

The long promised Messiah and Saviour who had come to dispel the darkness of sin and evil in the world and open the way to salvation. It also seems easy to surmise that the Magi probably felt surprised upon finding the new born king of the Jews, whom they had travelled many miles to pay homage to, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. Despite this fact, the Magi did what they had come to do as they prostrated themselves before the infant Jesus, did

Him homage, and then presented their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

After their encounter with the child Jesus, they then departed for their coun-



try by means of a different route with their lives most likely forever changed. The way that the Magi were led to the infant Jesus reaffirms for us the reality that God works in wonderful and surprising ways to bring about our salvation. This is why it is crucial for us to have a daily routine of prayer,

So that even amidst the busyness of life, we are setting aside time to truly open ourselves to God, to his grace, and to the new and perhaps surprising ways

God wants to bring Christ's light and love to others. The pilgrim journey that the Magi made to pay homage to Jesus reminds us similarly that each of us too, are pilgrims on a journey, striving to grow in our knowledge and love of the Lord so that we might one day reach our true home which is heaven. The good news is that we do not walk our pilgrim journey of faith alone. Rather, we have the teachings of Jesus in sacred scripture, the teachings of the Church, the sacraments, the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide and direct us, the prayers and support of one another, so that we may live more faithfully as a disciple of Jesus Christ and keep our feet firmly planted on the path that

leads to eternal life in heaven. Finally, the way the Magi humbly prostrated themselves before the child Jesus and presented Him with their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, reminds us that each and every day we should prostrate ourselves before the Lord and offer Him the greatest gift we can ever give --- that of our very lives.

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# CHRISTMAS GIFT

## Short Story for Christmas

**A**round this time last Christmas, Martha had bought a live Christmas tree from the New Market for Rs.400.

This year the same tree would be not less than Rs. 600. From a safe distance Clive watched her carry the tree to a taxi and get in. He followed her in his Ambassador car to the rented flat she had in the suburbs. Clive had taken an apartment across the road from where Martha lived, to spy on her. He knew it was an awful thing to do – but then, he loved her.

And when a loves a woman the way he did, certain exceptions had to be made. From the first moment he had seen her, there was no looking back. The only problem being it was one-sided. She didn't seem to know he existed. She had never once cast a glance his way. Her world was a different one from his.

Clive was now determined to change it all.

A week before Christmas last year she had fallen ill. Nothing serious, of course. But it was enough to keep her in bed. Unknown to Martha, he had done a lot.... One morning, from out of nowhere Martha had found her breakfast on a tray with a warm mug of hot tea, toasts, butter and jam, hard-boiled eggs, and a small note. "Get well. Someone who cares". Lunch and dinner was served similarly.

Martha was panic-stricken. The following day she had the locks changed. Clive still knew how to get in. The thought of someone in the house frightened her. She called the police. That was when he stopped to do things.

Clive had always marveled at the way she walked, or stood at the bus stop. At other times he had stood nearby



BY MELVYN BROWN

to hear her talk to shopkeepers, and her voice haunted him for hours on end. Her husky voice. The soft, mellow laugh. He would always be there close to her- yet, invisible to her senses. He could have reached out and touched her. She would not have known.

This evening he would speak to her. Clive braced himself for the moment. She had to know, he mused. Whatever the consequences she had to be made aware of his fondness for her. It was not wrong, he consoled himself, to declare his feelings. The thought of how she might react did not upset him. He had to be brave. Never venture never win. Clive recalled the famous line his mother used: Faint heart never won fair lady. It was, after all, a year since he had known her.

Martha had no one. No relatives. No friends. Not that he knew of. Like himself, she had no strings and no attachments. The colour of her eyes, the nut-brown tone of her hair, the fairness of her soft complexion made her seem even more beautiful to him than a Miss World.

Martha was three inches shorter than Clive, with a perfectly moulded body. Clive was the picture of the average Anglo-Indian male. He had rugged features, a clean-shaven face, well-groomed appearance, and a proper disposition.

The cold lips of winter brushed his cheeks, and a shudder ran down his spine. He stood outside the shop decorated for Yuletide, where Martha worked as a supervisor.

Clive looked at his watch and waited



patiently for her to leave, counting the minutes and the precious seconds. For once, the sharp winds didn't matter. Christmas shoppers raced past him. It was 9 pm. And that mattered. In the coat-pocket he felt the weight of the gold bangle.

At precisely 9:15, the shutters of the shop rolled down. Martha had decided to walk out of the side entrance. Clive rubbed his hands and blew into them. She stepped out and moved across the deserted street at a brisk pace. Clive followed behind her. Suddenly, he started to worry again. What if.... No, he must not imagine the worst, he kept telling himself.

The swish of her cotton dress against the long coat she wore made Martha seem like a woman out of a Victorian book. Her hair cascaded down her slender shoulders like a glistening stream. The loud click of her stilettos on the paved road tapped out a strangely sweet melody to his ears. From a top floor window of a house Christmas music floated by.

What was Clive to do? It seemed so strange that once again it was the Christmas season.... That a year had gone by, and Martha had not said a word to him. Would the Christmas Spirit help in his efforts to win her? The small gift in his coat pocket seemed to nudge him. It was his mother's gold bangle given to him before she passed

(Contd.. on p. 57)



(Contd.. from p. 56)

away.

"Give it to the woman you love," his mother had said, pressing the heavy gold bangle in his hand.

The bus stop was empty. There were no cabs around – and Clive had also left his car behind this evening. When the B23 came along it was empty too. Did this spell a good omen? Was this providence? Clive asked himself. Calcutta was never known to have an empty bus on any route. What he didn't know was that the bus in particular had been impounded.

He took the seat behind Martha. She suddenly turned around. He caught the flash of a hidden smile. Was his mind playing tricks on him? His heart raced heavily. She had noticed him, he gasped inwardly. What now?

'Miss Barnes...I...'

She stopped him.

"You have done so much for me this past one year," said Martha, "You have been so protective of me. I have noticed all your moves : life is a glass you look through from both sides, if you want to. I would like to be your friend Clive. My name is Martha. Don't ask me how I know your name", she smiled, and went on, "I have a small Christmas gift for you."

Martha rummaged through her bag and took out a gold wrist-watch. "It belonged to my father. Before he died, he told me to give it to the man who respected and cherished me. I think you deserve it".

As Clive reached out to accept it, his mother's gold bangle pinched him. He smiled – it was as if the spirit of his mother approved – and gently Clive reached into his coat pocket.

# German Christmas Cake

by Jubel D'Cruz



## Ingredients:

1 cup brandy (plus some for brushing the cake after baking)  
 220 gms raisins  
 170 gms prunes, cut up  
 70 gms glazed red cherries  
 70 gms dates  
 60 gms candied lemon peel  
 60 gms red cherries  
 1 cup walnuts, coarsely chopped  
 3 cups maida  
 3 gms baking soda  
 A pinch of salt  
 5 gms ground cinnamon  
 A pinch of ground cloves  
 1 cup unsalted butter  
 240 gms brown sugar  
 4 eggs, slightly beaten

## Method:

Soak the fruits in a cup of brandy in an air-tight container for a week. Place half the maida in a bowl along with baking soda, salt, cinnamon and cloves. Place the other half to the fruits. Add the walnuts and toss the

mixture until it is well coated.

Cream the butter and gradually add the brown sugar until the mixture is light and fluffy. Add the eggs and mix well. Gradually add the dry ingredients until it is totally incorporated. Stir in the fruit mixture and mix with your hand.

Line a 10-inch pan with wax paper and grease and flour the paper. Pour the batter into the pan, almost to the top. Place it in a cold oven and heat it to 135 degrees centigrade. Test with a toothpick or a fork after 2 hours but the cake mostly needs baking for another 50 minutes. Run a knife around the inside of the pan and turn onto a rack. Let it cool.

Brush the cake with some brandy. Wrap it up in a plastic cloth and place it in a metal can. The cake can be refrigerated or kept at room temperature and should be brushed with more brandy as often as you can. Before serving, cover the cake and decorate it with icing or with boiled apricot jam.

# Zwarte Piet / Black Peter

by Peter Castellino

**Z**warte Piet/ Black Peter must not be confused with Piet Zwart the English Black Peter or Black Pete and the Luxembourgish Schwaarze Peiter companion of St Nicholas- Dutch Sinterklaas and Luxembourgish Kleeschen in the folklore of the Low Countries first appeared in an 1850 book of Jan Schenkman as a black Moor with black face make up and colourful Renaissance attire and curly wigs, red lipstick and earrings has become controversial in the Netherlands where he is part of St Nicholas' feast on 5 December or Santaklaas bond ie St Nicholas' Eve in the Netherlands, Caracas and Ariba and on 6 December in Belgium and Luxembourg where children get sweets, presents and weeks before the feast he welcomed in a parade on arriving by boat from Madrid, Spain and has to amuse children and scatter peppermorten, kraidnoten and strooigoed-special sinter klaas candies for children who come to meet him and he also visits stores, schools and other places.

Helene Addine Gurbur and others trace Sinterklaas and his helpers origin to the Wild Hunt of Oden where riding the white horse Sleipner he flew through the air as the Wild Hunt's always with Hiegin and Muneum- the two black ravens who like Zwarte Piet would hasten to the roof's chimney ie a hole to tell Odin about the good and bad behaviour of mortals below but speculation made this Germanic theory useless for scholars today but it continues to be popular with non-scholarly sources and St Nicholas' tradition has non-ecclesial origin elements.

Medieval iconography shows the saint taming a chained devil who may or may not be black and since no hunt of a devil, servant or human like fiend com-



panion is found in the Netherlands' visual and textual sources from the 16th to the 19th century Zwarte Piet and his Germanic European equivalents from a long standing theory represented an enslaved devil fiend to assist his captor and the cleaned and fire-scorched devil appeared as a black human in early 19th century Netherlands like a Moor and the saint's servant and a devil as a saint's helper remains in the Austrian St Nicholas' tradition in Krampus' character but Zwarte Piet did not change in the Sinterklass' tradition and the latter was severe towards children and shown as a bogeyman when alone and the terrifying characteristics of the former were associated with the latter- however depicting a holy man in this manner troubled teachers and parents and when Zwart Peit was made Sinterklaas servant both adopted a softer character.

Older traditional Sinterklaas lyrics warn that Sinterklaas and his assistant have presents for well - behaved children but will punish naughty children and take bad children in a burlap sack to their Spanish home where Sinterklaas and his helper stay and songs and stories warn that slightly naughty children will not get

a present but a bundle of birch twigs ie a birching or a lump of coal.

In 1850 Amsterdam primary school teacher published the book *Sint Nicholas en Zijn Knecht*- St Nicholas and his servant with a servant for the first time in the saint's story and the servant is a page ie a dark person with Moorish clothes and the book had another mythos ie myth that became standard - St Nicholas' entocht or entry ceremony with his nameless servant in a steamboat from Spain with no reference to the saint's historical see of Myra- Lycia ie modern day Turkey and the servant wears white clothing with red piping but in the 1858 second edition the servant ie the page has a more colourful costume resembling earlier Spanish tradition like he does today and the book stayed till 1950 greatly influencing current celebrations-but the servant is nameless.

Joseph Albert Alderdenyk Thyme refers to a dialogue partner of the saint called *Pieter-me-krucht* in a handwritten note to E J Potgieter in 1850 and in 1820 recalls that as a child he went a St Nicholas celebration in Dominico Urata- an Italian merchant and consul's Amsterdam



house where the saint was accompanied by Pieter me Knicht – a fizzy haired Negro called Pieter myra Arnuet is as popular as the saint.

Her Fiest van Sinterklaas 1891 book has a servant called Pieter but till 1920s several books gave him other names and in contemporary appearance the servant and his looks differed.

In the 20 th and 21st century in a story from the Legenda Aiera retold by Eirlio Verevigs in the 1863 monograph Sinterklaas miraculous deed after his death was freeing a boy from slavery in the Babylonian emperor's court and his delivery back to his parents but the boy's skin colour is not mentioned and in the 20 th century both fictional and non-fictional narratives arose and Zwarte Piet was a farmer saint freed by the saint and later became his life long companion.

Another popular explanation of the 20 th century says Zwarte Piet was Spanish or an Italian chimney sweep whose blackness is caused by the permanent soot layer on his body from many chimney trips.

Dutch and Belgium people want to keep the traditional Zwarte Piet character but perceptions vary amongst different ethnic backgrounds age groups and ethnic backgrounds and outside the Netherlands criticism comes from international publications and news organisations and American essayist David Sedares wrote about the tradition and British comedian Russell Brand spoke against it calling it a colonial hangover but the 2013 survey has 90 percent of the Dutch not perceiving him as racist or associating him with slavery and want his appearance to be unaltered which matches the 2015 study of Dutch children of 3- 7 perceiving him as a fantastical clownish figure and not a black person but Dutch people desire more change for eg hair and lips.

In North and South Holland 9 percent and 7 percent people want his appearance changed and in Amsterdam Ghanians, Antileonians and Dutch Surinamese

oppose with 50 percent of the latter considering discriminatory to others and 27 percent to themselves and anti- Zwarte Piet movements who oppose it and Piet Niet and Zwarte Piete is racism established in 2010 but supporters of the tradition consider it Dutch colonial heritage with blacks subservient to whites and are or opposed to what they consider black- the Black Sambo figure's features ie bright red lips curly hair and large golden earrings.

Polarisation on the figure in public debates occurs with protestors considering him as an insult while his supporters consider him as part of their cultural heritage and recently police arrested protestors for disturbing peace and threats to prominent figures ,

Schools and businesses in the Netherlands began changing his clothes and make up and phasing him out totally and in 2015 Bijerkarf department store changed his clothing and adopted a clownish figure and Dutch schools also want to alter his appearance and Dutch children's network decided to use racially mixed up action groups to portray him in holiday broadcasts instead of blackface people and commercial broadcaster RTL in a similar decision in 2016 replaced with actors having soot on their faces.

The UN working group in its findings concluded that Black Pete is a racist figure and several Dutch people did not recognise him as a throwback to colonial times and slavery but this year Dutch celebrities calling for a Facebook make-over received death threats.

The character will be around for a year but people will still remember him even when he does not exist and children just want presents and it does not matter if the person handing them over to them is a Black Pete a woman yellow or black according to presenter Paul de Lesine on Facebook.

Thus we see the importance of Zwarte Piet/Black Piet.

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**Members are requested to inform us when they are settled, so that publication of their details can be discontinued.**

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Complexion, Edn. M.Sc., working as a Lab Technologist in Doha Qatar. Contact email : nishlasrado@gmail.com OR 0097455744161

**6611. MUMBAI :** Mangalorean RC Spinster, (Born in January 1988), Ht. 5' 4", Wt. 60 kgs, Wheatish Complexion, Edn. BMS, studing EMBA, working as a Sr. Analyst., Contact email : alliancecaldeira,nc@yahoo.com OR 9833097876.

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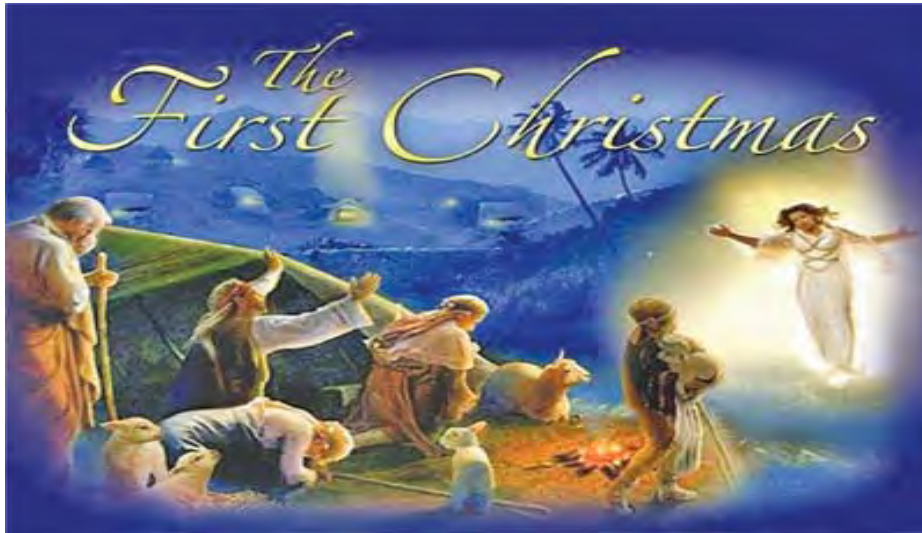
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# The First Christmas



**M**ary was sitting in the sun outside her house. It was a normal day; a bit of cooking and a bit of helping around the house. She was having a few minutes rest, when suddenly an angel appeared.

"Are you Mary?" he asked. "Yes, and who are you?" the startled girl replied. "I am an angel from God, and I have a surprise for you. You're going to have a baby." Mary raised her hand to her mouth. "It would be a surprise, I'm not even married."

The angel knew that Mary was going to marry Joseph. He explained the details. "Your child will be the son of God. He will be loved throughout the world for thousands of years." Mary thought that she was dreaming. "It's hard to understand," she said hesitantly. "What shall I call the baby?"

"His name will be Jesus," the angel said. "Now I must fly." And he was gone.

Mary sat for a very long time without saying anything. She thought about all that the angel had said, and she prayed a nice thank you prayer to God.

"Jesus," she said, "That's a nice name."

Mary married Joseph, and they both left for Bethlehem, where they were going to live.

They had to travel a long way, so Mary rode on a donkey while Joseph walked beside her.

They arrived in the town at nightfall, and Joseph asked if there was somewhere to stay because his wife was going to have a baby.

Someone suggested, "Try the inn, they rent out rooms."

They walked down the quiet streets. Joseph was worried about Mary, who was feeling more and more tired.

"Here we are," said Joseph. He told Mary to wait outside while he went in to arrange the things.

A few minutes later, a miserable Joseph came out. "There's no room at the inn."

The couple sadly left the inn, and found a stable to sleep in.

During the night Mary delivered her baby, and she told Joseph, "He shall be named Jesus." Joseph nodded

and said, "What a nice name."

Not so far away, there were some shepherds looking after their sheep. The angel suddenly appeared, and the shepherds looked surprised. The angel said, "Don't worry. I've come to tell you some happy news. The son of God has been born in Bethlehem tonight, go and see Him."

To the amazement of the shepherds, the sky was filled with angels singing, "Glory to God, and peace to all men."

"Come on friends," said one of the shepherds. "Let us go and have a look."

They found Mary, Joseph and little Jesus just as the angel had said, and while the sheep and cows looked on, the men all prayed to God. The baby lay asleep in a manger, with lots of warm cloths to cover Him up."

In those days there was a king called Herod. He got to hear of Jesus and was worried about it. He heard that three wise men were going to visit Jesus. They had seen a very bright star in the night sky, and were going to follow it. They knew that it was shining right over the manger.

"Go and find where He is," Herod said to the wise men. "I want to worship Him."

As the three men left, Herod chuckled to himself. "Worship Him! My foot!"

He looked out of the window and shouted to the three wise men, "Hurry back, I can't wait to worship Jesus."

The three wise men travelled at night, following the bright star. Finally they arrived, and gave baby Jesus lots of presents.

They were just going to go back home when an angel spoke to them and said, "Don't tell Herod where Jesus is. He wants to kill Him, not worship Him."

"Okay," said the three wise men. "We'll go back a different way."

They did, and so Herod never found out where Jesus was.



BY JUBEL D'CRUZ





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Happy New Year 2017*



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***Wishing one and all***

***A Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year 2017***

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**Johnson Therattil & Alice Johnson**



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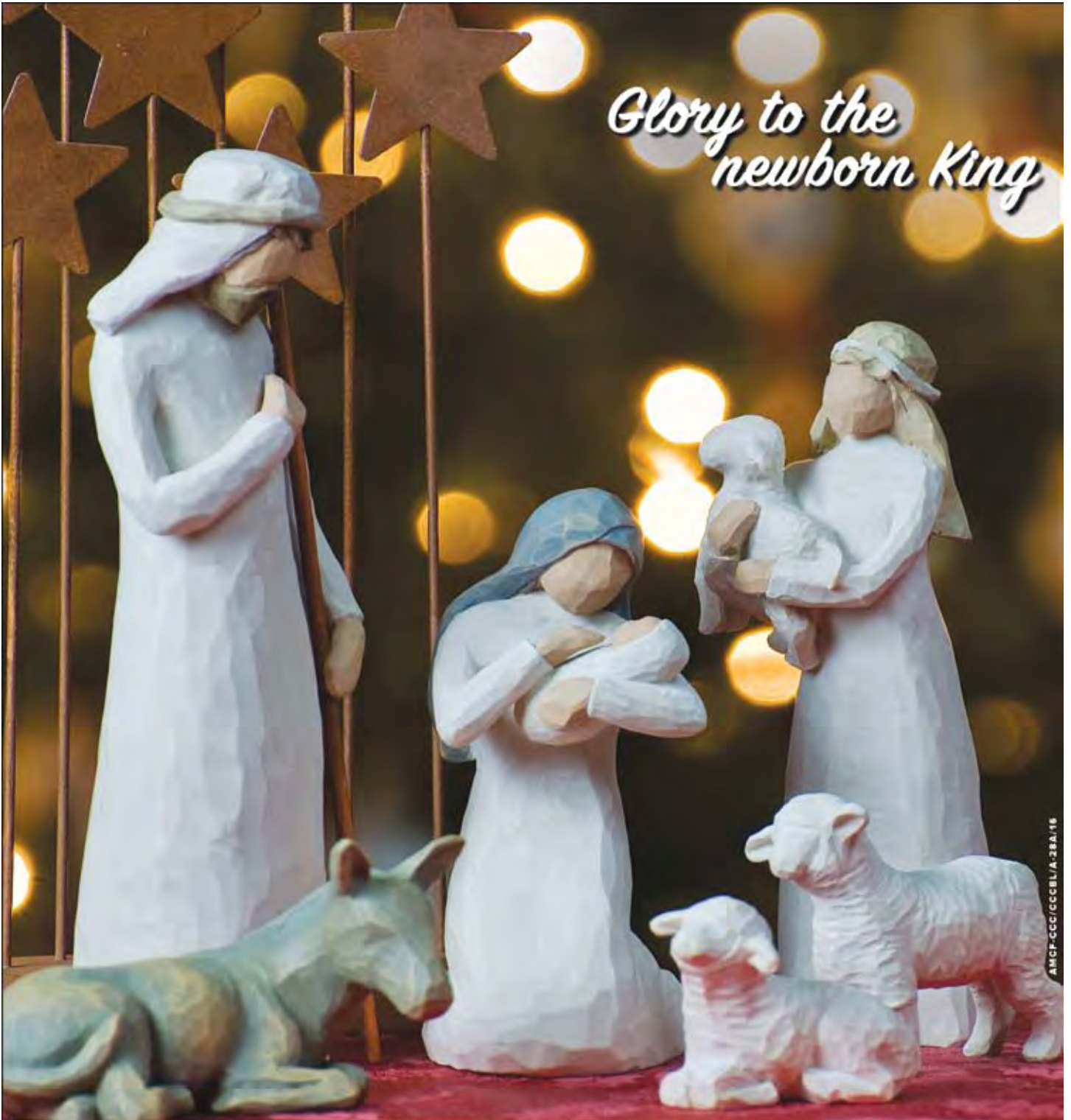
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**Leslie Lobo**

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**Malcolm Correa**

Currently Director on the Board of Citizencredit Co-operative Bank. 45 years experience as Quality Control Manager, Hoechst Pharmaceuticals. Was on the Mg Committee of the Bombay East Indian Association, for 50+ years.



**Edwin Gonsalves**

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**Joseph (Josie) M. B. Mascarenhas**

Businessman & Dedicated Patient Care-giver, Holy Family Hospital. Former Director of the Citizencredit Co-operative Bank. Life patron of Jeevan Jyoti, Home for Destitute Women and Children. Secretary, City Concerns Foundation.



**Frederick Castellino**

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**Royston Pereira**

Advocate, Bombay High Court. Worked in the Strategy and Planning Department, Bank of India. Has 41 years banking experience covering Industrial Relations, Forex & Credit Card Operations. Secretary, Nashik Catholic Sanatoria Co-op Soc. Ltd.



**Leslie Mascarenhas**

Advisory Consultant & Entrepreneur with 25 years experience in transaction banking and alternate channels domain. Held key leadership positions in major banks like HDFC Bank, Bank of America (ICI) Bank and Deutsche Bank.



**Roger C. B. Pereira**

Innovative Marketing & Communications professional with 57 years experience. Was an advisor to Bank/Am, Bank of Baroda, Citibank, VISA Credit Cards, Citizencredit Co-operative Bank, Credit Suisse, JP Morgan Chase, State Bank.



**Pricilla Butthello**

Entrepreneur & Industrialist Founder, Butthello Enterprise. Founded Cemix Concrete, a ready mix concrete manufacturing company. Soft skills trainer and a certified image consultant.



**Dr. Frederick J. de Souza, PhD.**

Advocate, Bombay High Court. Former Director, Vice Chairman, and Chairman, Citizencredit Co-operative Bank. Management Consultant with 30 years experience in top management positions in the Private sector.



**Arvind Pinto, IRS**

Ex-Chief Commissioner, Income Tax who retired after 35 years of service. Currently an Advocate & Senior Consultant/Counsel, I.T. Department. President, St Anthony's Homes Co-operative Society, Chembur.



**James Pereira**

41 years with Bank of India where he worked in Forex, Advances, Branch banking, Credit card, HR and Marketing. Currently, on contract with Bank of India as a Financial Literary Counselor.





**Raymond Lobo  
and  
Nathalia Lobo,  
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*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2017*



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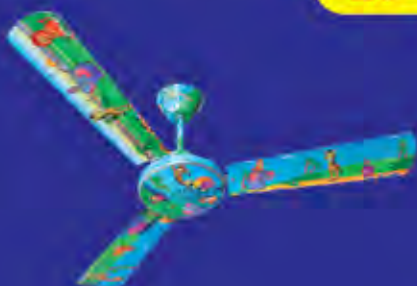
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## Hallelujah

"You have nothing to worry about. The LORD is taking care of you on this journey" (Judges 18:6)

**Wishing you all Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year - 2017**

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"For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

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